FIRST COMICS
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NO. 7
$1.25 CANADA
E-MAN
FACE THE RIGHTEOUS WRATH OF GANTRY BABBITT!
PANIC IN THE PULPIT!
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FIRST™ NOTES

DIRTY WORDS

For the past seven years now, Howard Chaykin and I have been playing a little game. You see, we both share several rather uncommon interests: radio and television booth announcers, swing music, 1930s illustrators .... I have to admit I've learned a lot from Chaykin — he's turned me on to a lot of neat stuff.

So when we initially put First Comics together — long before we announced our presence to the real world — Howard was one of the very few people I took into my confidence. I figured he was safe: Howard had been working on a long-standing commitment to graphic novels and to paperback covers and magazine illustration, and for all purposes had left the traditional comics world behind.

So you can imagine how surprised I was when, oh about fifteen months ago, I received a call from Chaykin that started off something like this:

"That's what we're in business for, Howie." (He hates being called Howie.)

"No, I mean *my* comic book, you dummy!" (I hate being called dummy.)

"Well," making a lame attempt at playing hard-to-get, "What's it about?"

"Oh, the usual. Women and violence. And patriotism."

That's not a non-sequitor. Chaykin's probably the most patriotic person I know. Not the usual "Love It or Leave It" nonsense that serves to divide instead of unite — and is therefore *not* patriotic. Howard's patriotism comes from pride — and from great hopes for America. The United States isn't *the* land of opportunity. It isn't *the* land of freedom. Other nations have comparable levels of opportunity and freedom.

America is the land of *hope*. And that's a wonderful thing to have.

So amid all the violence and women, amidst all the style we have come to associate with Howard's work, you're going to find a great deal of patriotism in **American Flagg,** which premieres this month. Thoughtful, hopeful patriotism.

Rick Obadiah, Publisher

Mike Gold, Managing Editor
Joe Staton, Art Director
Rick Oliver, Associate Editor
Bruce Patterson, Production Coordinator

Richard Felber, Business Manager
Kathy Kotsivas, Office Manager

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A FIRST COMICS PUBLISHING PRODUCTION

ON TO DETROIT!

Faster than anybody thought possible, The Attic Theater, 525 Lafayette Street in Detroit, mounted their production of the Warp trilogy. Part 1, "My Battlefield, My Body" will be running through July 9th; part 2, "Unleased, Unchained" will be running from July 15 to August 27; part 3, "To Die ... Alive" will be running from August 31 through September 10. After that, all three plays will be running in repertory.

(If you miss any chapter, don't despair — there's a full recap in the program book and a flashback on stage at the opening of chapters two and three.)

William J. Norris will be directing — Bill originated the parts of both Symax and Dagon in the original Chicago and New York productions, and in the 1979 Chicago revival. Bill also directed Warp in Minneapolis several years ago.

Much of the original Warp material — including Rick Paul's sets, Cookie Gluck's costumes and Lee Ditkowski's special effects — are being used in the Detroit productions.

Tickets run from $7.00 to $12.00 per show. Call 313-963-7750 for more information.

If you're a fan of the **Warp** comics, or of comics in general, you're in for a real surprise. If you're a theater buff hey, you're in for one hell of a surprise!

Tell 'em First Comics sent you.

THE CONVENTION RAG

For the next few months, we'll be keeping you informed of major conventions at which sundry First Comics people will be showing up. Please keep in mind these words are being written in March and read in June, so plans can change.

During the next month:

June 25-26, at the Woodlawn Holiday Inn in Charlotte, N.C.: Mike Grell and Howard Chaykin.

July 4th weekend, at the New York Sheraton Hotel in New York City: Howard Chaykin, Joe Staton, and publisher Rick Obadiah.

July 9 and 10, at the Franklin Plaza Hotel in Philadelphia: Joe Staton, Howard Chaykin (boy — he's sure a party animal, ain't he?), and yours truly, Mike Gold.

We'll give you the next chapter next month.

And, honest, we're very much looking forward to seeing you at any and all of these shows!

— Mike Gold

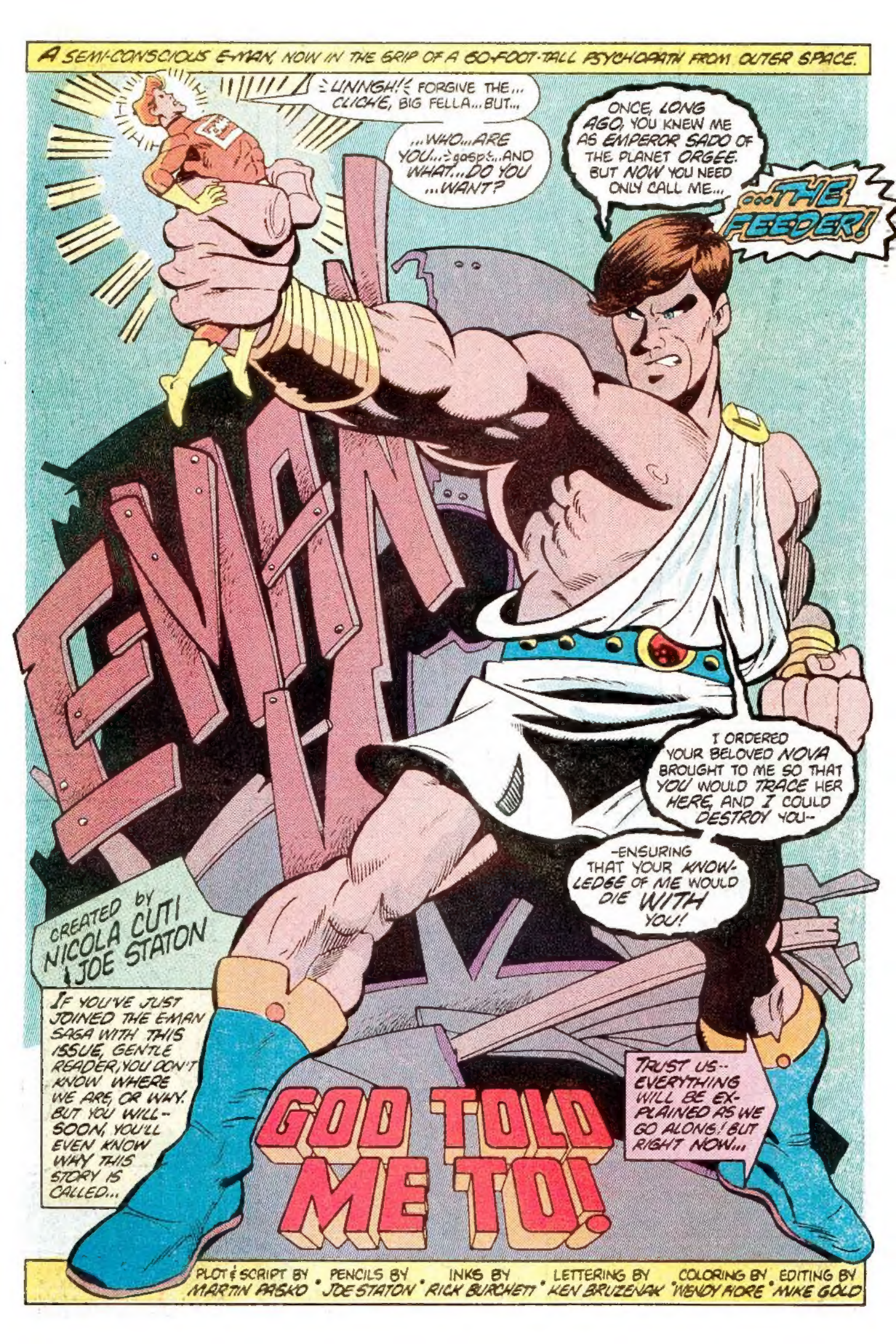
ON SALE NOW

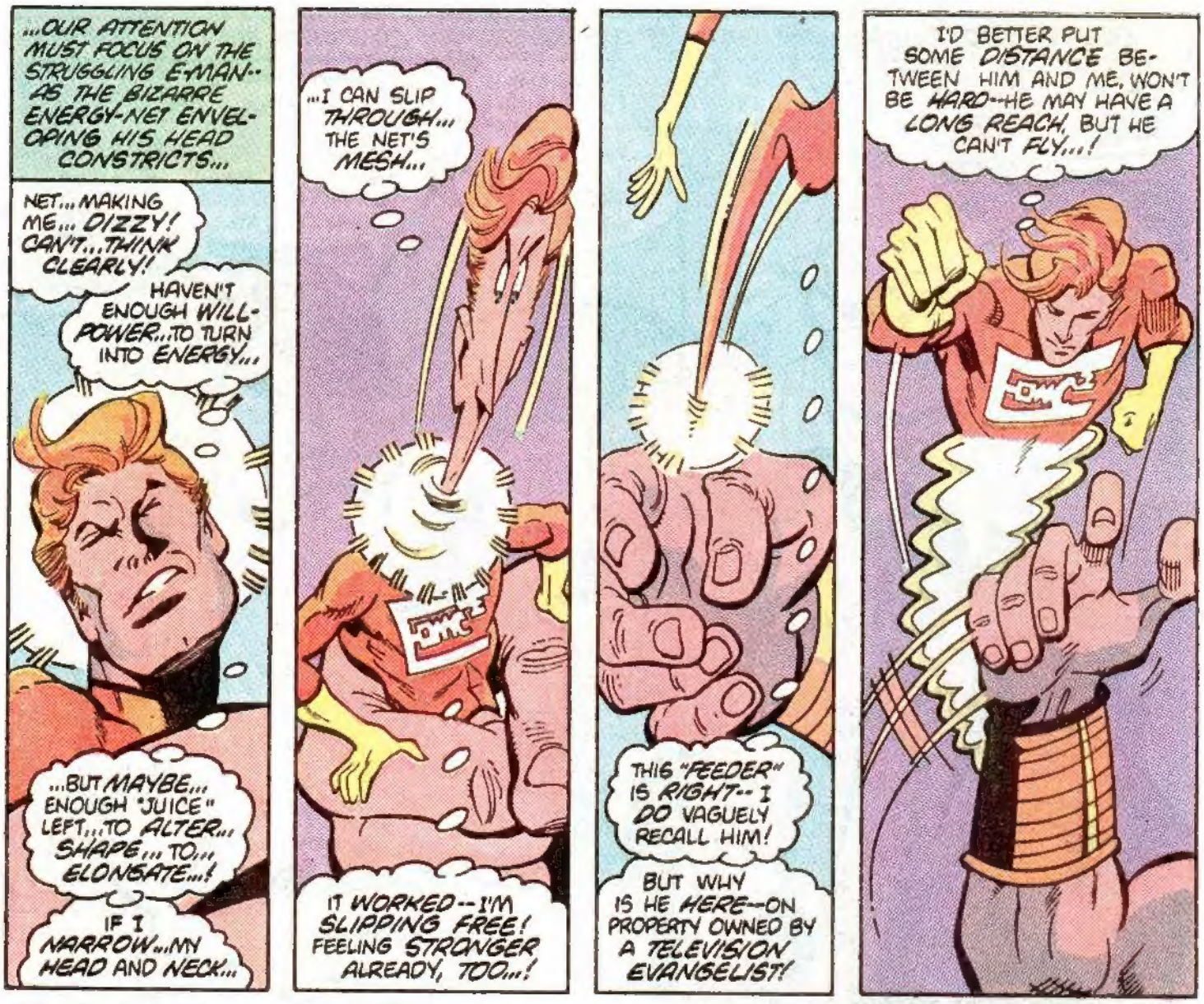
American Flagg #1: Now it all begins! Meet Reuben Flagg — the hero for his times ... and his times just happens to be fifty years in the future, when the entire world is on the auction block and at wits end! The creation of writer/artist **Howard Chaykin** — this book has to be seen to be believed!

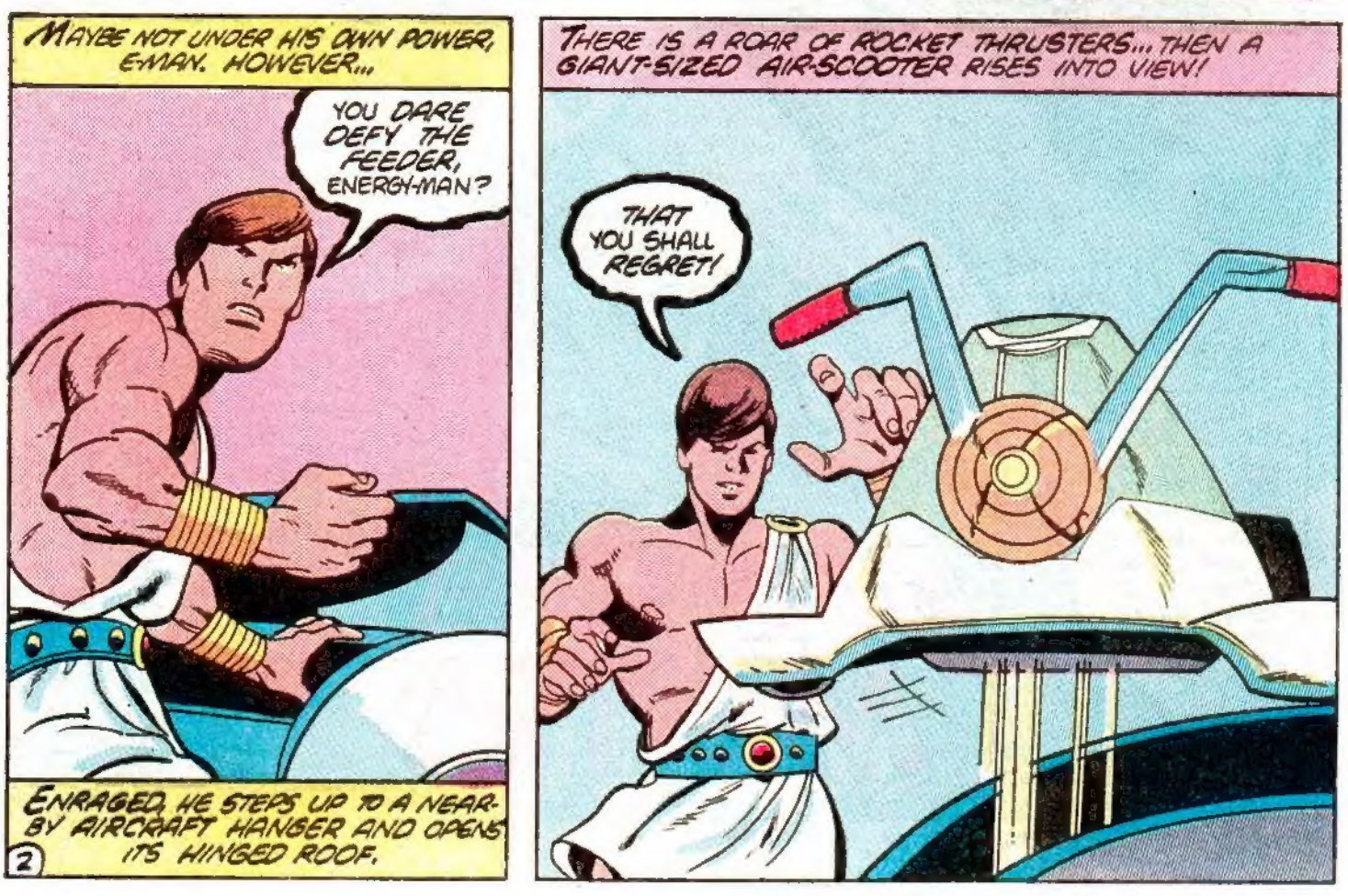
Jon Sable, Freelance #5: "Killzone — The Origin of Jon Sable, Part 3." There's not that much to say without giving it away — if you're a fan of high adventure, of edge-of-the-seat drama, of great comic books — or if you're merely among **Mike Grell's** zillions of fans — this one's for you!

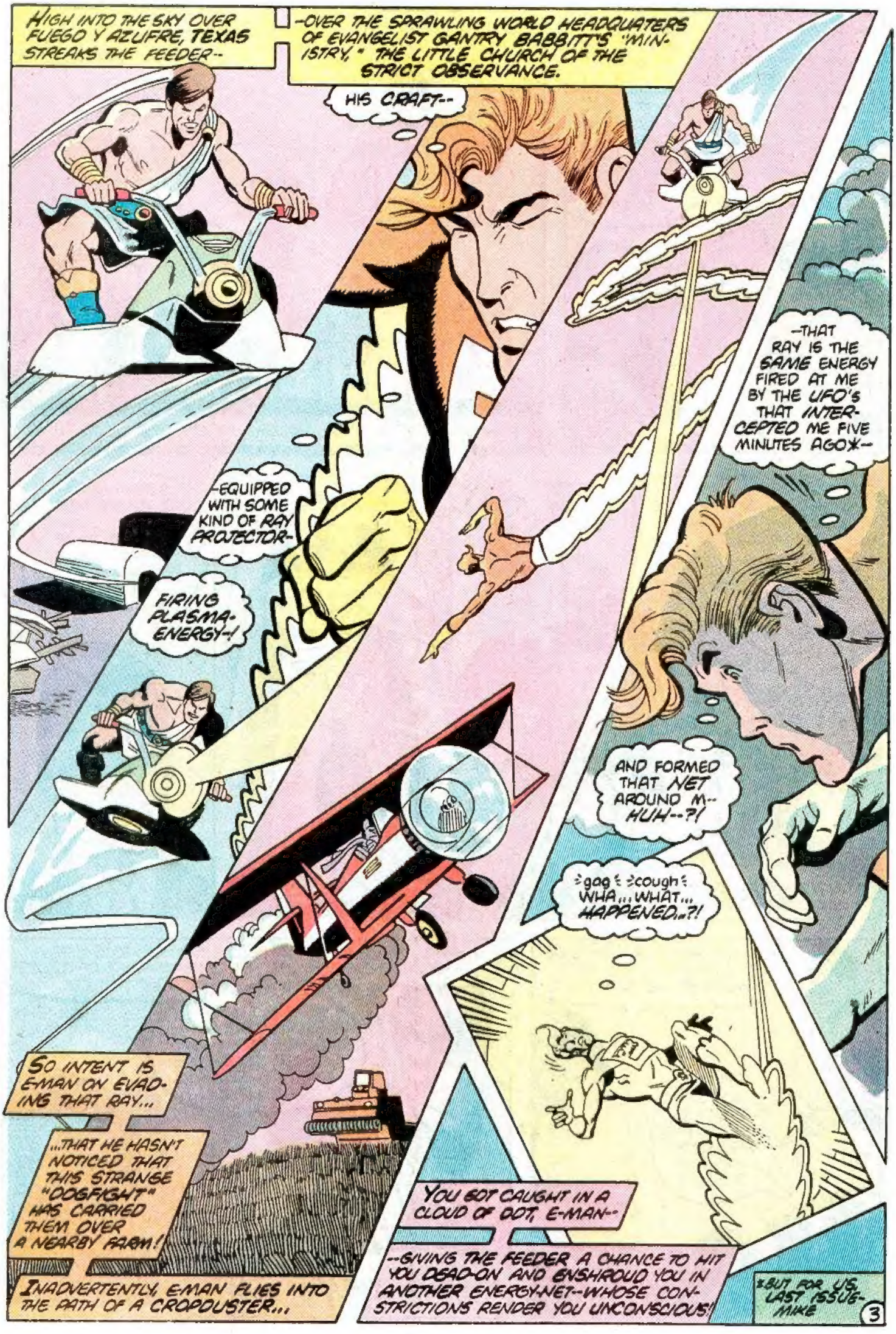
Starslayer #9: How do you convince a horde of slaves you're there to free them — if they think you just destroyed the planet Earth? That's Torin MacQuillion's problem as he tries to stop the "Flotilla," a 28 page thriller by **John Ostrander, Lenin Delsol** and **Mike Gustovich.**

Warp #7: Cumulus and Chaos are about to find Infinity — but first they must plow through Dagon and The Gunfighter From Hell! **Frank Brunner, Peter Gillis,** and **Mike Gustovich** continue the adaptation of the hit plays. Plus: the final chapter of the latest Ostrander-Delsol-Patterson Sargon saga!


A SEMI-CONSCIOUS E-MAN, NOW IN THE GRIP OF A 60-FOOT-TALL PSYCHOPATH FROM OUTER SPACE.
=UNNGH!= FORGIVE THE... CLICHÉ, BIG FELLA... BUT...
...WHO...ARE YOU...=gasp&...AND WHAT...DO YOU ...WANT?
ONCE, LONG AGO, YOU KNEW ME AS EMPEROR SADO OF THE PLANET ORGEE. BUT NOW YOU NEED ONLY CALL ME...
...THE FEEDER!
I ORDERED YOUR BELOVED NOVA BROUGHT TO ME SO THAT YOU WOULD TRACE HER HERE, AND I COULD DESTROY YOU--
-ENSURING THAT YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF ME WOULD DIE WITH YOU!
TRUST US-- EVERYTHING WILL BE EXPLAINED AS WE GO ALONG! BUT RIGHT NOW...
CREATED by NICOLA CUTI & JOE STATON
IF YOU'VE JUST JOINED THE E-MAN SAGA WITH THIS ISSUE, GENTLE READER, YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE WE ARE, OR WHY. BUT YOU WILL-- SOON, YOU'LL EVEN KNOW WHY THIS STORY IS CALLED...
E-MAN
GOD TOLD ME TO!
PLOT & SCRIPT BY MARTIN PASKO • PENCILS BY JOE STATON • INKS BY RICK BURCHETT • LETTERING BY KEN BRUZENAK • COLORING BY WENDY MORE • EDITING BY MIKE GOLD

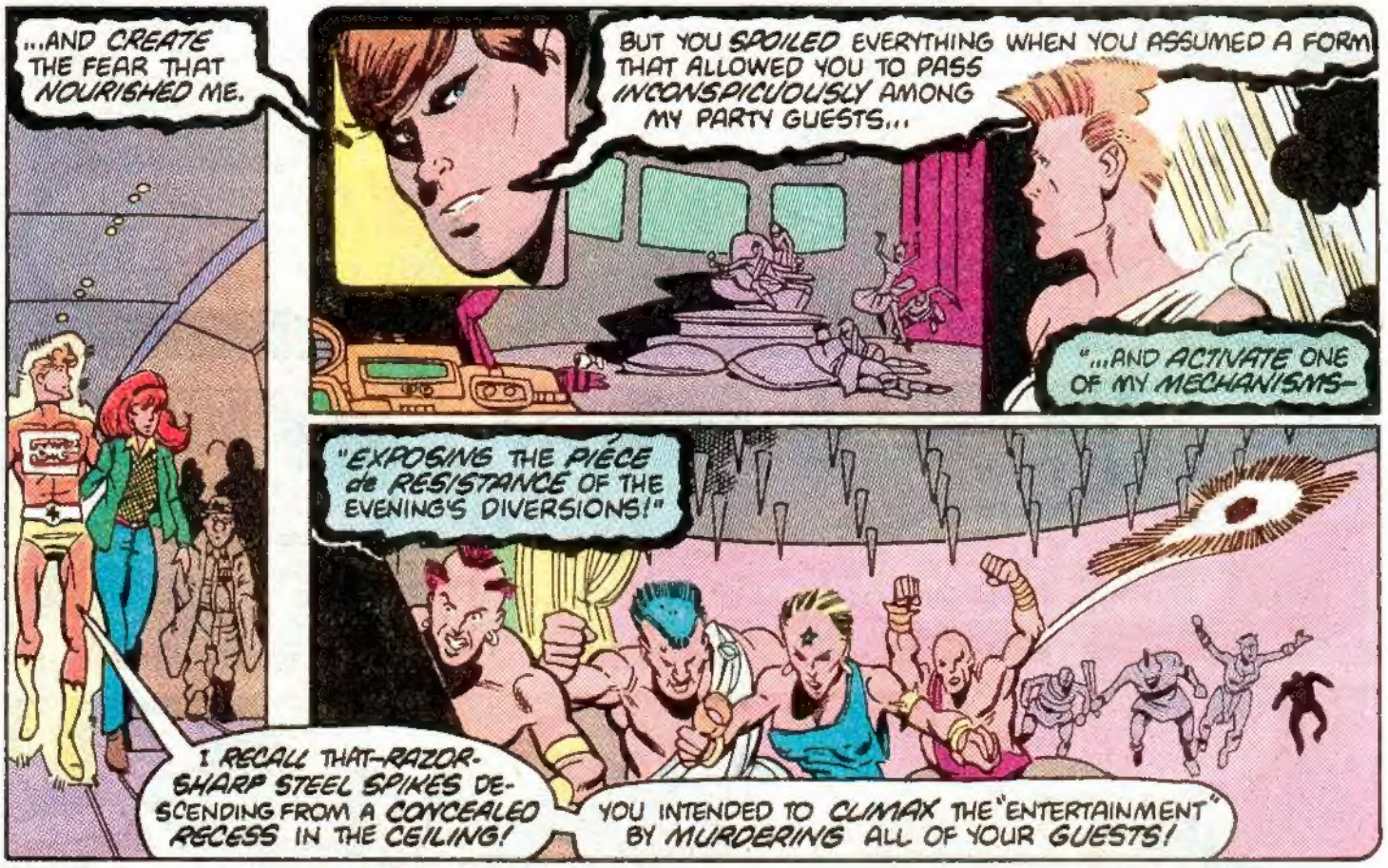

...OUR ATTENTION MUST FOCUS ON THE STRUGGLING E-MAN-- AS THE BIZARRE ENERGY-NET ENVELOPING HIS HEAD CONSTRICTS...
NET...MAKING ME...DIZZY! CAN'T...THINK CLEARLY!
HAVEN'T ENOUGH WILL-POWER...TO TURN INTO ENERGY...
...BUT MAYBE... ENOUGH "JUICE" LEFT...TO ALTER... SHAPE...TO... ELONGATE...!
IF I NARROW...MY HEAD AND NECK...
...I CAN SLIP THROUGH... THE NET'S MESH...
IT WORKED--I'M SLIPPING FREE! FEELING STRONGER ALREADY, TOO...!
THIS "FEEDER" IS RIGHT--I DO VAGUELY RECALL HIM!
BUT WHY IS HE HERE--ON PROPERTY OWNED BY A TELEVISION EVANGELIST!
I'D BETTER PUT SOME DISTANCE BE-TWEEN HIM AND ME, WON'T BE HARD--HE MAY HAVE A LONG REACH, BUT HE CAN'T FLY...!


MAYBE NOT UNDER HIS OWN POWER, E-MAN. HOWEVER...
YOU DARE DEFY THE FEEDER, ENERGY-MAN?
ENRAGED, HE STEPS UP TO A NEAR-BY AIRCRAFT HANGER AND OPENS ITS HINGED ROOF.
2
THERE IS A ROAR OF ROCKET THRUSTERS... THEN A GIANT-SIZED AIR-SCOOTER RISES INTO VIEW!
THAT YOU SHALL REGRET!


HIGH INTO THE SKY OVER FUEGO Y AZUFRE, TEXAS STREAKS THE FEEDER--
-OVER THE SPRAWLING WORLD HEADQUATERS OF EVANGELIST GANTRY BABBITT'S "MINISTRY," THE LITTLE CHURCH OF THE STRICT OBSERVANCE.
HIS CRAFT--
-EQUIPPED WITH SOME KIND OF RAY PROJECTOR-
FIRING PLASMA-ENERGY-!
-THAT RAY IS THE SAME ENERGY FIRED AT ME BY THE UFO's THAT INTERCEPTED ME FIVE MINUTES AGO!--
AND FORMED THAT NET AROUND M--HUH--?!
=gag= =cough= WHA...WHAT... HAPPENED..?!
SO INTENT IS E-MAN ON EVADING THAT RAY...
...THAT HE HASN'T NOTICED THAT THIS STRANGE "DOGFIGHT" HAS CARRIED THEM OVER A NEARBY FARM!
INADVERTENTLY, E-MAN FLIES INTO THE PATH OF A CROPDUSTER...
YOU GOT CAUGHT IN A CLOUD OF DDT, E-MAN--
--GIVING THE FEEDER A CHANCE TO HIT YOU DEAD-ON AND ENSHROUD YOU IN ANOTHER ENERGY-NET--WHOSE CONSTRICTIONS RENDER YOU UNCONSCIOUS!
=BUT FOR US, LAST ISSUE-- MIKE
3

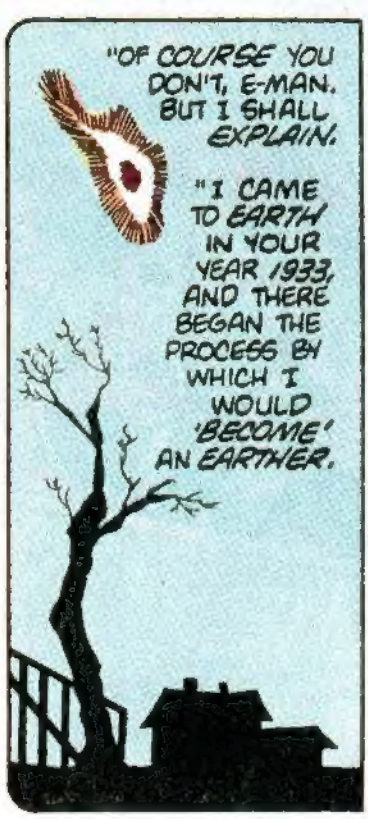
HE AWAKENS TO FIND HIMSELF--AND HIS FRIENDS, NOVA KANE, MIKE MAUSER AND DONALD DUKE--IN THE CLUTCHES OF THE FEEDER'S HENCHMEN...
:unnh: SO YOU'RE BEHIND EVERYTHING I'VE BEEN GOING THROUGH LATELY, EH, FEEDER?
AND THAT GUY WHO CALLS HIMSELF "THE THOUGHTMASTER" --WORKS FOR YOU! *
BUT :unnnh: WHY AM I SEEING FOUR OF HIM?
I'VE HEARD OF SEEING DOUBLE...BUT QUADRUPLE?
NO, THERE ARE FOUR OF US HERE, E-MAN.
* E-MAN BATTLED "THE THOUGHTMASTER" LAST ISSUE--MIKE.
"THOUGHTMASTER" ISN'T A NAME, IT'S A RANK--IN THE FEEDER'S HIERARCHY OF EMPLOYEES.
THERE ARE DOZENS OF US.
AND YOU ALL LOOK EXACTLY ALIKE?
NOT A GOOD JOB FOR A NON-CONFORMIST, IS IT?
LOOK!
IT'S HIM--
--THE "VOICE OF RIGHTEOUS LOVE" HIMSELF!
GANTRY BABBITT?!
THASS RAHT--AT YO' SERVICE.
AH HAVE COME T' PERSONALLY ESCORT YEW T'YUH NEW HOMES--
--DEEP INSIDE OUR COMPLEX HEAH,..ROUGHLY 100 FEET UNNERGROUND TO BE EXACT.
HOW DO YOU FIT INTO ALL THIS, BABBITT--WHATEVER "THIS" IS?
I SHALL ANSWER ALL YOUR QUESTIONS, E-MAN.
BUT I CANNOT ACCOMPANY YOU UNDERGROUND, OF COURSE --I WOULD NOT FIT.
BESIDES, I MUST SUPERVISE THE CONSTRUCTION OF MY NEW, LARGER QUARTERS--FOR I AM GROWING, EVEN STILL.
WE SHALL, HOWEVER, CONTINUE OUR "CHAT"...
4

...VIA CLOSED-CIRCUIT TELEVISION.
WHAT ABOUT THOSE ANSWERS YOU PROMISED, FEEDER?
YES, OF COURSE. WE HAVE "MET" BEFORE, BUT YOU DON'T REALLY KNOW ME.
I HAVE EXISTED SINCE THE DAWN OF TIME, E-MAN.
I SPENT MY FIRST 100 MILLENIA AS A CREATURE OF ENERGY--
--NOT UNLIKE YOURSELF. AND, LIKE YOU, I DRIFTED FROM WORLD TO WORLD...
...SETTLING--BRIEFLY--ON THOSE INHABITED PLANETS I FANCIED.
I WOULD FEED ON THE EMANATIONS OF FEAR FROM THEIR INHABITANTS.
--FEAR THAT I INSTILLED IN THEM--UNTIL I WOULD GROW SO LARGE, THE PLANET WOULD BREAK UP UNDER ME--
LITERALLY CRUMBLING INTO SPACE DEBRIS BENEATH MY WEIGHT!
I DO NOT EXCRETE WASTE, YOU SEE.
"IN TIME, I EXPLORED ORGEE--AS YOU DID...
"AFTER I'D INSTALLED MYSELF AS EMPEROR SADO!
"I ENTERTAINED MY COURT WITH FILMS OF THE ATROCITIES I'D COMMITTED AGAINST THE ORGEEANS!
"I ALSO BROADCAST THOSE FILMS INTO EVERY ORGEEAN HOME--TO TERRORIZE THE POPULACE..."
5

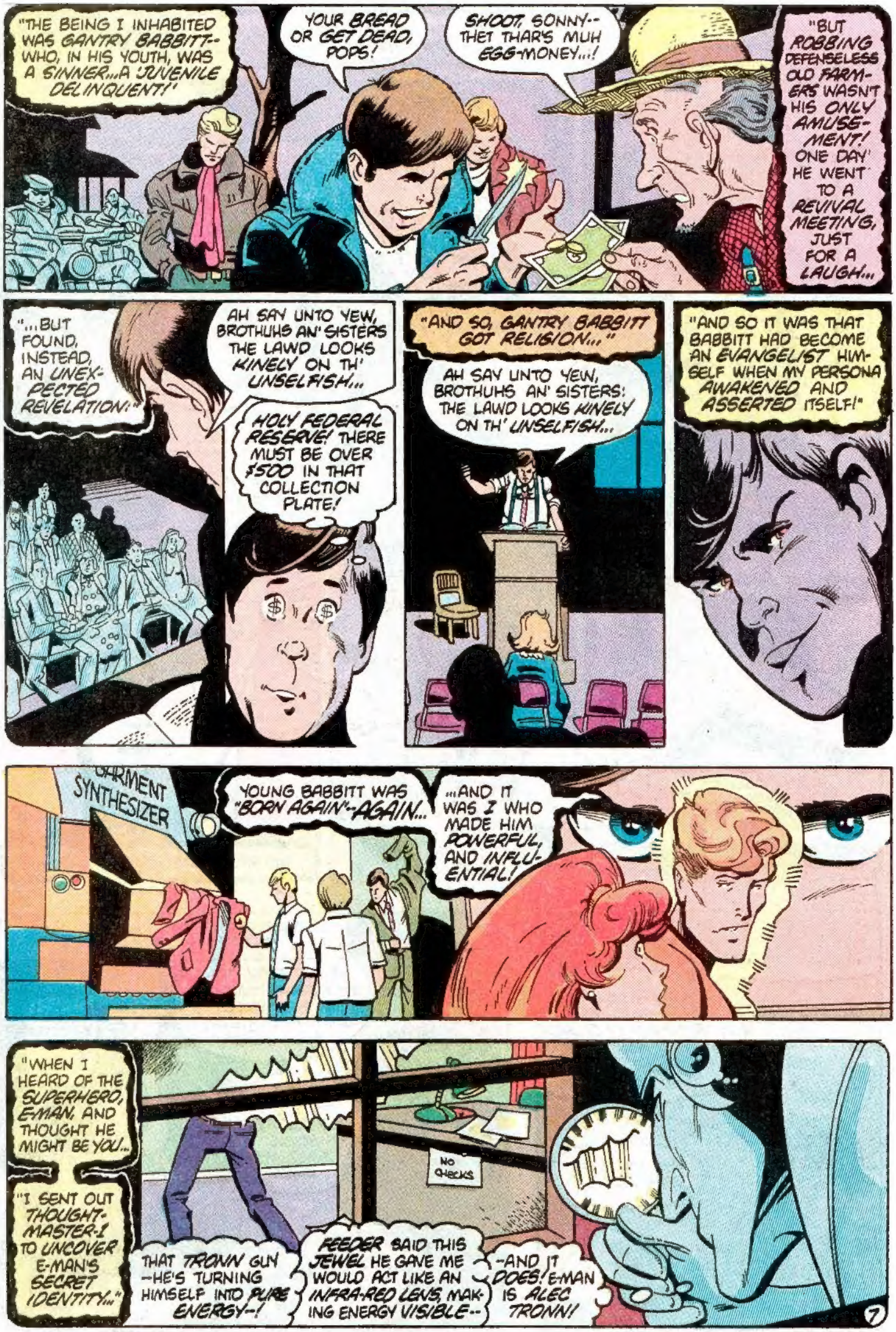

...AND CREATE THE FEAR THAT NOURISHED ME.
BUT YOU SPOILED EVERYTHING WHEN YOU ASSUMED A FORM THAT ALLOWED YOU TO PASS INCONSPICUOUSLY AMONG MY PARTY GUESTS...
"...AND ACTIVATE ONE OF MY MECHANISMS-
"EXPOSING THE PIÉCE de RESISTANCE OF THE EVENING'S DIVERSIONS!"
I RECALL THAT-RAZOR-SHARP STEEL SPIKES DESCENDING FROM A CONCEALED RECESS IN THE CEILING!
YOU INTENDED TO CLIMAX THE "ENTERTAINMENT" BY MURDERING ALL OF YOUR GUESTS!

BUT, THANKS TO YOU, E-MAN, THEY FOUND OUT-- AND ALMOST DESTROYED THE THRONE ROOM IN THEIR RUSH TO GET THEIR HANDS ON ME!
HOWEVER, I ESCAPED...
GARMENT SYNTHESIZER
"...BY REVERTING TO ENERGY."
YES...ALL THIS CAME BACK TO ME YESTERDAY--FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YEARS...

I KNOW IT DID, BUT IT WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE BEEN ERASED FROM E-MAN'S MIND--
--WASN'T IT, THOUGHTMASTER-ONE?
Y-Y-YESSIR. I'M AFRAID... I SCREWED UP, SIR.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND--
6

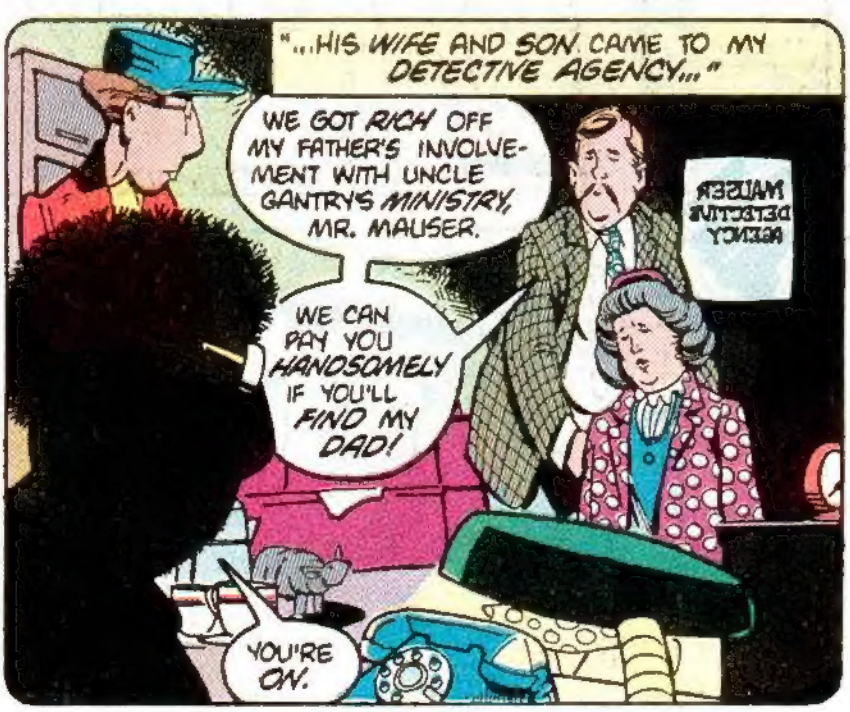

"OF COURSE YOU DON'T, E-MAN. BUT I SHALL EXPLAIN.
"I CAME TO EARTH IN YOUR YEAR 1933, AND THERE BEGAN THE PROCESS BY WHICH I WOULD 'BECOME' AN EARTHER.

YOU SEE, I AM ESSENTIALLY PARASITIC!
"I ASSIMILATE BY INHABITING A NEWBORN SPECIMEN OF THE INDIGINOUS LIFE--AT WHICH TIME MY CONSCIOUSNESS LIE DORMANT."

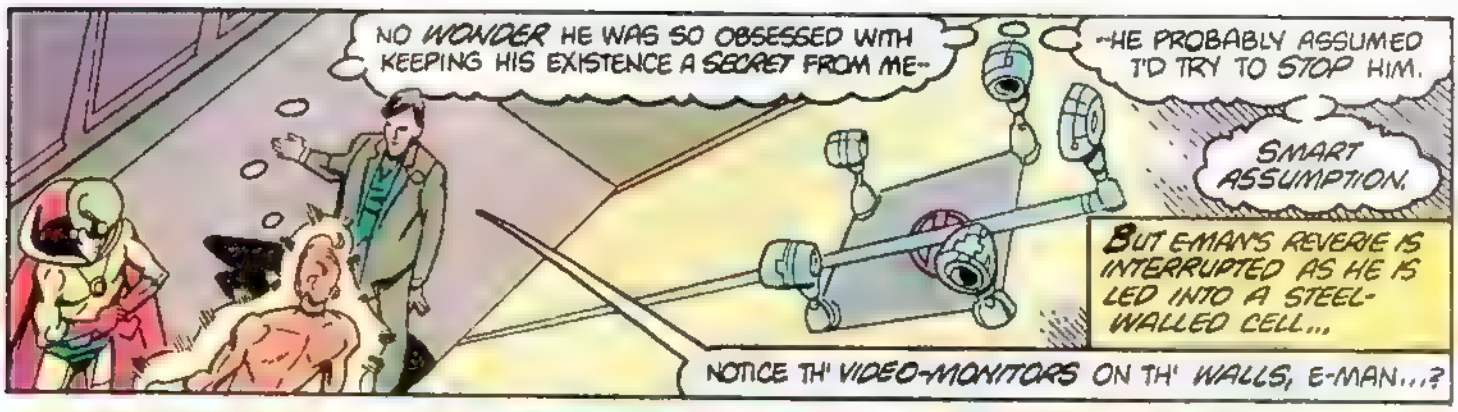

"THE BEING I INHABITED WAS GANTRY BABBITT--WHO, IN HIS YOUTH, WAS A SINNER...A 'JUVENILE DELINQUENT!'
YOUR BREAD OR GET DEAD, POPS!
SHOOT, SONNY--THET THAR'S MUH EGG-MONEY...!
"BUT ROBBING DEFENSELESS OLD FARMERS WASN'T HIS ONLY AMUSEMENT! ONE DAY HE WENT TO A REVIVAL MEETING, JUST FOR A LAUGH...
"...BUT FOUND, INSTEAD, AN UNEXPECTED REVELATION:"
AH SAY UNTO YEW, BROTHUHS AN' SISTERS THE LAWD LOOKS KINELY ON TH' UNSELFISH...
HOLY FEDERAL RESERVE! THERE MUST BE OVER $500 IN THAT COLLECTION PLATE!
"AND SO, GANTRY BABBITT GOT RELIGION..."
AH SAY UNTO YEW, BROTHUHS AN' SISTERS: THE LAWD LOOKS KINELY ON TH' UNSELFISH...
"AND SO IT WAS THAT BABBITT HAD BECOME AN EVANGELIST HIMSELF WHEN MY PERSONA AWAKENED AND ASSERTED ITSELF!"
GARMENT SYNTHESIZER
YOUNG BABBITT WAS "BORN AGAIN"--AGAIN...
...AND IT WAS I WHO MADE HIM POWERFUL, AND INFLUENTIAL!
"WHEN I HEARD OF THE SUPERHERO, E-MAN, AND THOUGHT HE MIGHT BE YOU...
"I SENT OUT THOUGHT-MASTER-I TO UNCOVER E-MAN'S SECRET IDENTITY..."
NO CHECKS
THAT TRONN GUY --HE'S TURNING HIMSELF INTO PURE ENERGY--!
FEEDER SAID THIS JEWEL HE GAVE ME WOULD ACT LIKE AN INFRA-RED LENS, MAKING ENERGY VISIBLE--
--AND IT DOES! E-MAN IS ALEC TRONN!
7

"WE STAGED A 'SUICIDE ATTEMPT' ON THE GEORGE WASHINGTON BRIDGE-
"--KNOWING THAT YOU WOULD SPOT THE MAN WHILE ON PATROL, AND INTERVENE.
"AND THAT'S PRECISELY WHAT YOU DID, E-MAN-- ON THAT NIGHT SEVERAL MONTHS AGO...
"...WHEN THE THOUGHTMASTER LURED YOU INTO A CONFRONTATION, SO HE COULD TURN HIS HYPNO-PENDANT ON YOU:"
FORGET EVERYTHING YOU EVER SAW OR LEARNED OR DEDUCED ABOUT SADO OR THE PLANET ORGEE!
IN FACT, I WANT YOU TO FORGET YOU FOUGHT ME! FORGET YOU EVER MET ME, EVEN!
YES... mumble-mumble... MUST FORGET...!
"YOU COLLAPSED ON THE BRIDGE, UNCONSCIOUS...
"...AND AWOKE REMEMBERING NOTHING!"

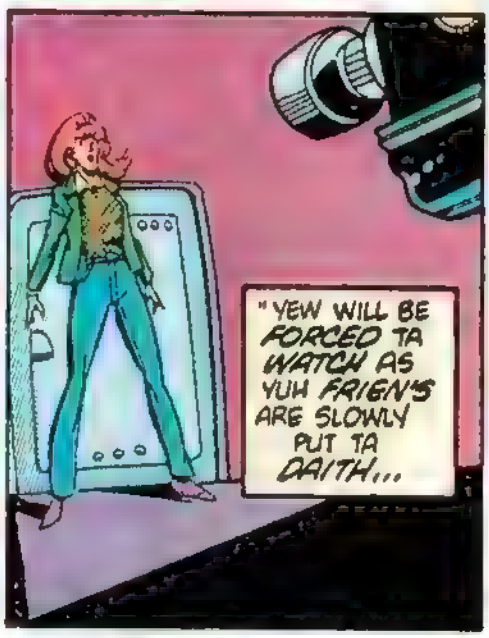
NOW, HEAH'S WHERE YEW COME INTA THE STORY, MR. MAUSER.
MAH BABY BROTHER BAKER--WHO WAS WORKIN' FOR TH' CHURCH --STARTED ASKIN' TH' WRONG KINDA QUESTIONS ABOUT ME.
WE HADDA KEEP 'IM QUIET.
BUT AFTER HE DISAPPEARED...
8


"...HIS WIFE AND SON CAME TO MY DETECTIVE AGENCY..."
WE GOT RICH OFF MY FATHER'S INVOLVEMENT WITH UNCLE GANTRY'S MINISTRY, MR. MAUSER.
WE CAN PAY YOU HANDSOMELY IF YOU'LL FIND MY DAD!
YOU'RE ON.
MAUSER DETECTIVE AGENCY

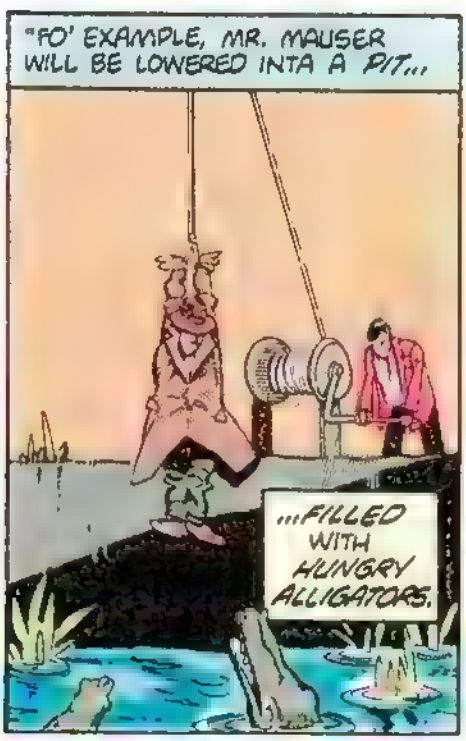
I FOUND OUT THAT BAKER BABBITT HAD HIRED MAUSER...
AND WHEN I LEARNED THAT ONE OF E-MAN'S FRIENDS WAS INVESTIGATIN' THE CHURCH, I GREW CONCERNED.
I SEE. YOU WANTED TO BE SURE MAUSER HADN'T UNDONE THE THOUGHTMASTER'S SPELL...SO YOU SENT HIM AFTER ME AGAIN!
BUT THE SECOND TIME, HE ACCIDENTALLY CAUSED ME TO REMEMBER WHAT I'D KNOWN-- UNDOING HIS OWN WORK!
BUT THE FEEDER WAS DETERMINED TO MAKE SURE YOU WEREN'T A THREAT TO HIM!
SO HE SENT ONE OF THE THOUGHT-MASTERS AFTER YOU--
STILL, HE DID MANAGE TO PUT ME IN THE HOSPITAL...
--BUT YOU PUT UP ONE HELLUVA FIGHT, SO...
...HE SETTLED FOR ABDUCTING ME, INSTEAD-- KNOWING YOU'D TRY TO FOLLOW!
AN' LIKE A COUPLA PRIZE JERKS...
...DONNIE AN' ME HADDA TAG ALONG, OY.
GUESS YUH DIDN'T FIGGER ON NO 60-FOOT DUDE GRABBIN' YEW AS YUH FLEW OVAH TH' COMPOUND, HUH?!
HMM...IF THE FEEDER IS STILL GROWING... HE'LL EVENTUALLY CRUSH THE EARTH--
--JUST AS HE DID THOSE OTHER PLANETS--!


NO WONDER HE WAS SO OBSESSED WITH KEEPING HIS EXISTENCE A SECRET FROM ME--
--HE PROBABLY ASSUMED I'D TRY TO STOP HIM.
SMART ASSUMPTION.
BUT E-MAN'S REVERIE IS INTERRUPTED AS HE IS LED INTO A STEEL-WALLED CELL...
NOTICE TH' VIDEO-MONITORS ON TH' WALLS, E-MAN...?

"THEY'RE CONNECTED TA CLOSED CIRCUIT CAMERAS IN TH' OTHER CELLS.


"YEW WILL BE FORCED TA WATCH AS YUH FRIEN'S ARE SLOWLY PUT TA DAITH...

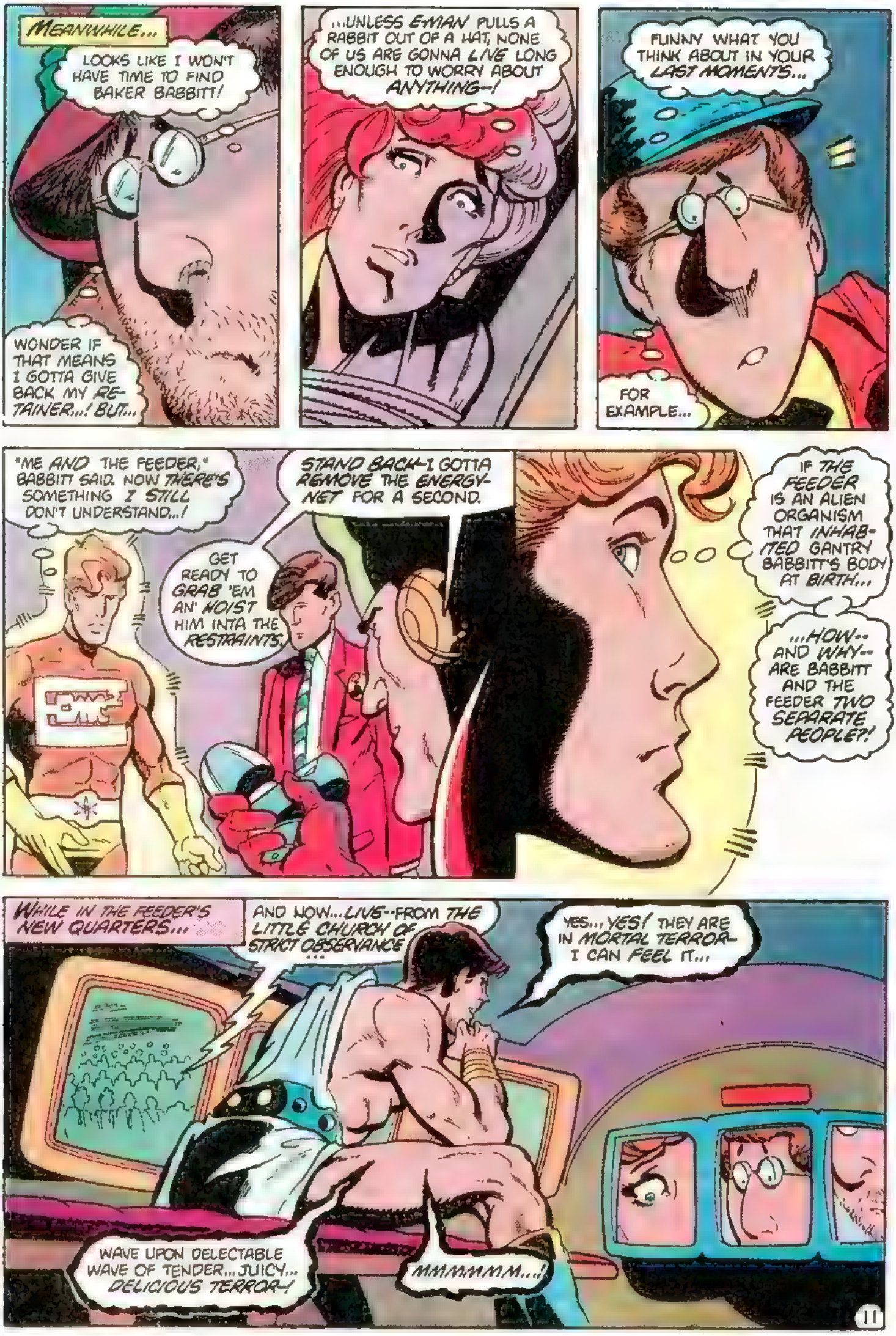
"...AN' TH' FEEDER WILL DINE ON TH' HORROR YEW--AN' THEY-- WILL EXPERIENCE.


"FO' EXAMPLE, MR. MAUSER WILL BE LOWERED INTA A PIT...
...FILLED WITH HUNGRY ALLIGATORS.

"MEANWHILE, MISS KANE IS BEIN' TIED TO A RAILROAD TRACK.
SALOON
SHERIFF
"AN THERE'S A REAL TRAIN THET'LL BE COMIN ALONG THEM TRACKS!

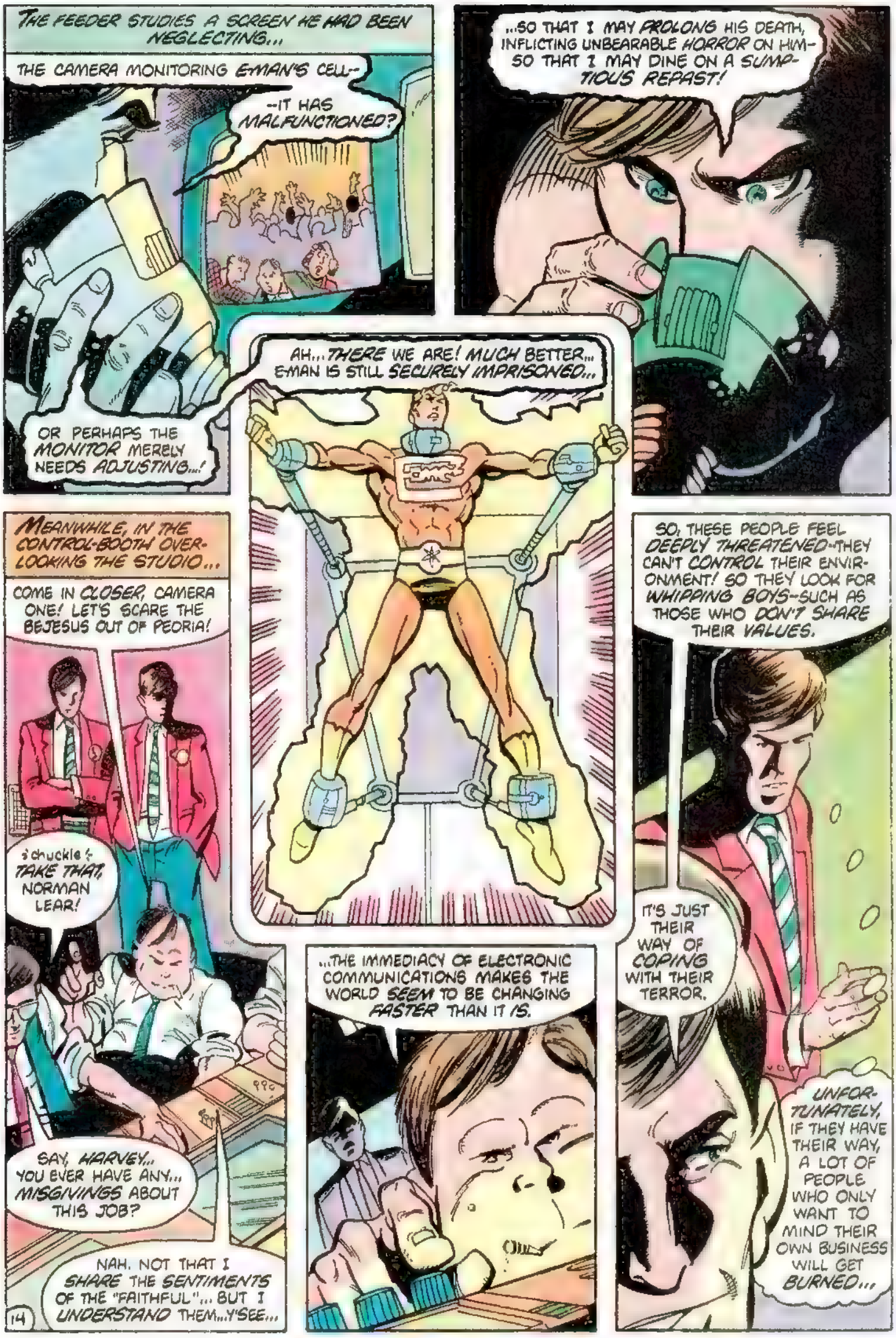
"AS FO' MR. MAUSER'S NEPHEW, DONALO.. HE'S GONNA BE BURIED WITH AGONIZIN' SLOWNESS...
"...IN QUICKSAND!"

THE RESTRAINTS WE DESIGNED FO' YEW WILL PREVENT YUH FROM TURNIN' INTA ENERGY.
ME AN' THE FEEDER WANNA OFF YUH PERSONALLY--AFTER AH FINISH BROADCASTIN' MAH LIVE, FOUR-HOUR SPECIAL, TONIGHT.
SEEYA LATER!


MEANWHILE...
LOOKS LIKE I WON'T HAVE TIME TO FIND BAKER BABBITT!
WONDER IF THAT MEANS I GOTTA GIVE BACK MY RE-TAINER...! BUT...
...UNLESS E-MAN PULLS A RABBIT OUT OF A HAT, NONE OF US ARE GONNA LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO WORRY ABOUT ANYTHING--!
FUNNY WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT IN YOUR LAST MOMENTS...
FOR EXAMPLE...
"ME AND THE FEEDER," BABBITT SAID. NOW THERE'S SOMETHING I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND...!
STAND BACK--I GOTTA REMOVE THE ENERGY-NET FOR A SECOND.
GET READY TO GRAB 'EM AN' HOIST HIM INTA THE RESTRAINTS.
IF THE FEEDER IS AN ALIEN ORGANISM THAT INHAB-ITED GANTRY BABBITT'S BODY AT BIRTH...
...HOW-- AND WHY-- ARE BABBITT AND THE FEEDER TWO SEPARATE PEOPLE?!
WHILE IN THE FEEDER'S NEW QUARTERS...
AND NOW...LIVE--FROM THE LITTLE CHURCH OF STRICT OBSERVANCE...
YES...YES! THEY ARE IN MORTAL TERROR-- I CAN FEEL IT...
WAVE UPON DELECTABLE WAVE OF TENDER...JUICY... DELICIOUS TERROR--!
MMMMMM...!
11

IT'S A SPECIAL EDITION OF "THE GOOD TIME GOSH-WOW HOUR"...
...STARRING "THE VOICE OF RIGHTEOUS LOVE" -THE REVEREND DOCTOR GANTRY BABBITT!
SECURITY...SUCCESS... MONEY! THESE ARE TH' LAWD'S WAY OF REWARDIN' THOSE WHO PUT HIM FIRST! SAY "AMEN!"
AMEN!
AMEN!!!
AMEN!
AMEN!
AN' AH STAND BEFOAH YEW TODAY AS A SHININ' EXAMPLE O' THET PRINCIPLE AT WORK.
BUT AH KNOW WHAT YEW'RE THANKIN':
"BROTHUH' GANTRY... HOW CAN AH DO TH' LAWD'S WORK?
"NOTHIN" NO MORE IS AS THE BIBLE TELLS US IT SHOULD BE!
"TH' WORLD IS FULL O' SECULAR HUMANISTS WHO DON'T BELIEVE IN SIN! AH'M FRIGHTENED!
"SO HOW CAN AH DO ANYTHANG? AH AM TOO SCARED TO ACT!"
WELL, AH DON'T BLAME YUH FO BEIN' SCARED OUTTA YO' WITS!
OH, NO!
:GASP!:
HEAVEN FORBID!
SAY IT AIN'T SO!
I DO DECLARE
BUT TAKE HEART--YO' TERROR IS A MANIFESTATION OF GOD'S GRACE! REMEMBUH WHUT IS WRITTEN:
"BLESSED ARE TH' MEEK, FOR THEY SHALL INHERIT TH' EARTH!"
NOW ALL WE GOTTA DO IS ABOLISH TH' ESTATE TAX!
TODAY, THE PRICE OF OUR MEEKNESS IS LIVIN' SURROUNDED BY FILTH, DEGRADATION AN' UPPITINESS! IT'S TIME WE SAID...
'WE AIN'T GONNA PAY IT!
12

IT'S MY BOY! IT'S MY RIGHT TO DO ANYTHING I WANT WITH IT!
FO' WHAT KIND OF WORLD IS IT THAT WE—OR OUR CHILLUN, OR OUR CHILLUN'S CHILLUN—SHALL INHERIT?
TRUST THEM? THEY DON'T EVEN KNOW THE MEANING OF THE WORD "TRUTH"...!
CAPITALIST IMPERIALIST DOGS! WE WILL BURY YOU!
TRY
NO!
WHEN GOD MADE MAN SHE WAS JOKING
A WORLD WITHOUT AN AMERICA —A WORLD CONQUERED BY GODLESS COMMUNISM, THANKS TO NUCLEAR DE-ARMAMENT?
OUR PRESIDENT
A WORLD IN WHICH PERVERSIONS RUN RAMPANT, MASQUERADIN' AS CONSTITUTIONALLY-PROTECTED PERSONAL FREEDOMS?
WANT SOME CANDY, YOU HUNKY LITTLE BOY, YOU?
MAX RAFFERTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
CANDY
ANDROPOV
THAT'S ASSUMIN' YUH CHILLUN EVEN HAVE CHILLUN...
...THAT THEY AIN'T ALL BEEN TURNED INTA HOMOSEXUALS AN' FEMYNISTS AN WASTE THEIR LIVES KILLIN' BABIES OR NOT HAVIN' ANY!
WITH EACH OF BABBITT'S THUNDEROUS SYLLABLES, THE BLOOD PRESSURE OF THE ASSEMBLED CONGREGATION RISES! BUT NONE SUSPECT THAT THEIR FEAR-EMANATIONS ARE BEING COLLECTED BY ORGEEAN EMOTION-BATTERIES IN THE PEWS...
...AND TRANSMITTED DIRECTLY TO... THE FEEDER!
OH, NO!
:GASP!:
AHH... DELICIOUS!
FEAR TERRA HUMAN
BUT, WAIT— WHAT IS THIS?
13


THE FEEDER STUDIES A SCREEN HE HAD BEEN NEGLECTING...
THE CAMERA MONITORING E-MAN'S CELL--
--IT HAS MALFUNCTIONED?
OR PERHAPS THE MONITOR MERELY NEEDS ADJUSTING...!
...SO THAT I MAY PROLONG HIS DEATH, INFLICTING UNBEARABLE HORROR ON HIM- SO THAT I MAY DINE ON A SUMPTIOUS REPAST!
AH... THERE WE ARE! MUCH BETTER... E-MAN IS STILL SECURELY IMPRISONED...
MEANWHILE, IN THE CONTROL-BOOTH OVERLOOKING THE STUDIO...
COME IN CLOSER, CAMERA ONE! LET'S SCARE THE BEJESUS OUT OF PEORIA!
schuckle schuckle TAKE THAT, NORMAN LEAR!
SAY, HARVEY... YOU EVER HAVE ANY... MISGIVINGS ABOUT THIS JOB?
NAH. NOT THAT I SHARE THE SENTIMENTS OF THE "FAITHFUL"... BUT I UNDERSTAND THEM... Y'SEE...
...THE IMMEDIACY OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS MAKES THE WORLD SEEM TO BE CHANGING FASTER THAN IT IS.
SO, THESE PEOPLE FEEL DEEPLY THREATENED--THEY CAN'T CONTROL THEIR ENVIRONMENT! SO THEY LOOK FOR WHIPPING BOYS--SUCH AS THOSE WHO DON'T SHARE THEIR VALUES.
IT'S JUST THEIR WAY OF COPING WITH THEIR TERROR.
UNFORTUNATELY, IF THEY HAVE THEIR WAY, A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO ONLY WANT TO MIND THEIR OWN BUSINESS WILL GET BURNED...

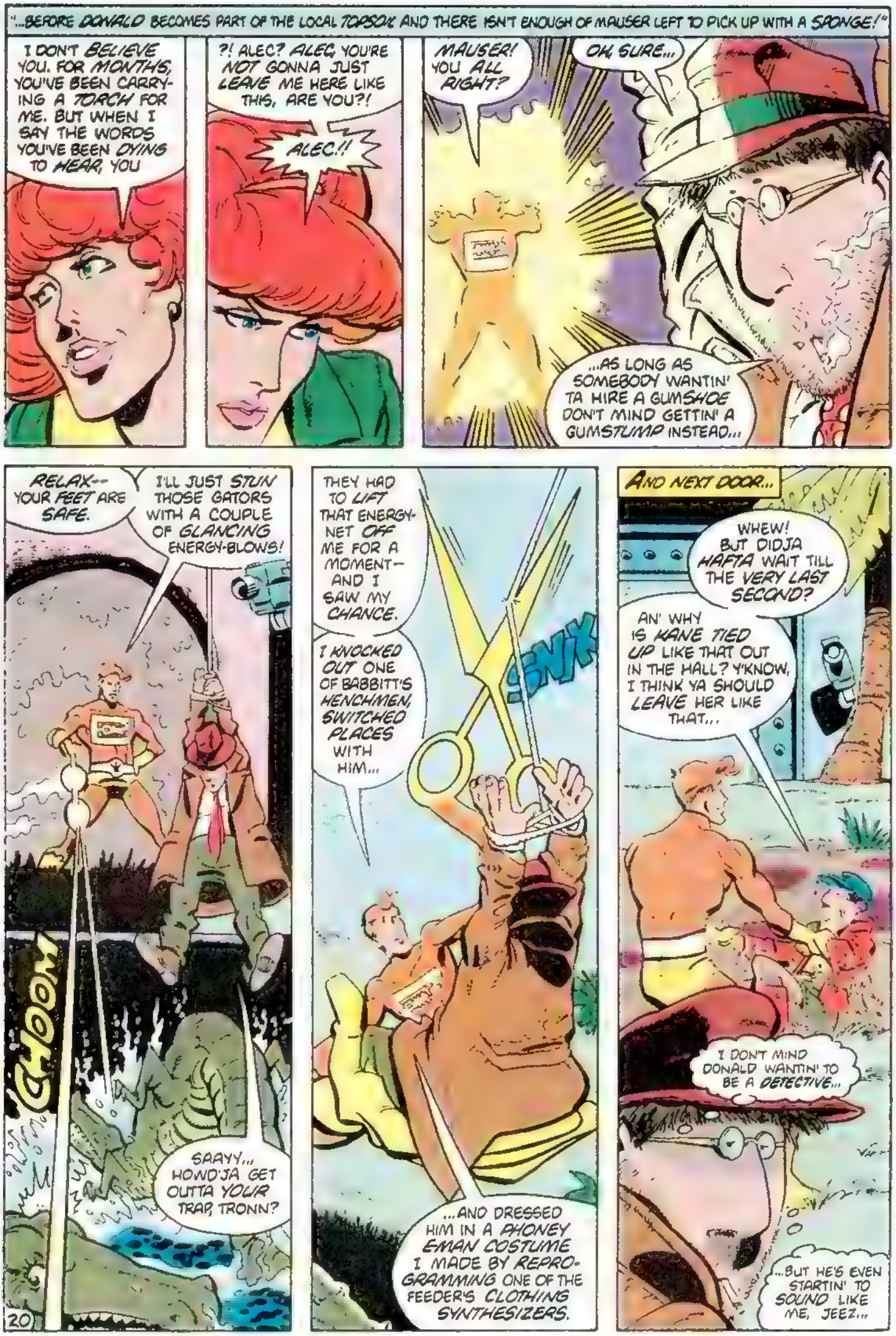
...BECAUSE BABBITT'S FOLLOWERS CAN'T DEAL WITH THEIR INSECURITIES.
AND THE FEEDER DE-LIBERATELY PLAYS ON THOSE FEARS --HE'S EX-PLOITING THEM FOR HIS OWN SUSTENANCE!
WHO IS THIS? OBVIOUSLY HE CAN'T BE JUST AN-OTHER OF BABBITT'S ASSISTANTS--
-AND HE'S NOT...AS ANYONE WOULD KNOW COULD THEY SEE HIM STEP OUTSIDE AND-IN A BURST OF ENERGY-BECOME... E-MAN!
BEFORE THEY LEFT MY CELL...
"...THOUGHTMASTER-ONE TOLD BABBITT THAT HE WAS READY TO 'NEUTRALIZE' HIS BROTHER'S FAMILY--
HOTEL PINK FLAMIN
"--WHICH CAN ONLY MEAN HE'S TRACED THEM TO THE HOTEL IN ATLANTIC CITY, WHERE MAUSER TOLD THEM TO HIDE OUT!"
AND SO, MINUTES LATER...
BRA KASH
THERE HE GOES-- INTO MRS. BAKER BABBITT'S HOTEL-SUITE!
I JUST HOPE I'M NOT TOO LATE--!
ZEEOOW
TRAITORS TO THE LITTLE CHURCH OF THE STRICT OBSERVANCE--
I BRING YOUR JUST REWARD!
W-W-WELL, I D-D-DIDN'T EXACTLY THINK YOU WERE ROOM SERVICE!

E-MAN?!
IMPOSSIBLE! I LEFT YOU TIED UP!
OKAY, HAVE IT YOUR WAY: I'M NOT HERE.
AND YOU'RE HALLUCINATING IN 3-D.
CHOOM!
NO! NO! YOU WON'T DENY US OUR REVENGE!
FOOSH
EDDY? ARE YOU SMOKING?
NO, MAMA.
THAT'S WHAT I WAS AFRAID OF...
YOU SET FIRE TO THEIR BED! THEY'LL BE KILLED!
THAT WAS THE GENERAL IDEA...
WITH A BURST OF KINETIC ENERGY, E-MAN SETS THE BED'S CASTERS IN MOTION--
BONK
AWD!
--SENDING IT CAREENING FROM THE BEDROOM INTO THE ADJOINING BATH--
--WHERE THE SHOWER INSTANTLY EXTINGUISHES THE BLAZE!
SSSSST!

UNFORTUNATELY (OR DESERVEDLY, DEPENDING ON YOUR POINT OF VIEW)...
YAAAHH!
HUH--?! SHADES OF RUBE GOLDBERG! THE BED KNOCKED OVER A CHAIR...
...WHICH, IN TURN, KNOCKED HIM OUT THE WINDOW--?!
RELAX, THOUGHTMASTER!--
--I'LL...
...SAVE YOU...?
NO NEED, ENERGY-MAN!
IN MY BELT, I JUST HAPPEN TO HAVE AN INFLATABLE HYDRAULIC POGO-STICK--
--AND WITH IT, I SHALL MAKE GOOD MY ESCAPE--
--BELIEVE ME!
BOUNCE
OF COURSE I BELIEVE YOU.
I BOUGHT THE POGO-STICK BIT, DIDN'T I?
HOWEVER, I ALSO BELIEVE I'LL STILL WIN THIS FIGHT!
CHOOM
CHOOM
GO AHEAD, E-MAN--STRIP ME OF MY WEAPONS! BUT I'LL NEVER--
HUH? WHERE'D HE GO?!
RIGHT HERE!
OR DON'T YOU RECOGNIZE ME AS A SATURNIAN SAVATE-SAVVY SIMIAN?
RUN!
OWW!
THE BLOW SENDS THE THOUGHTMASTER HURTLING THROUGH THE HOTEL CASINO...
17

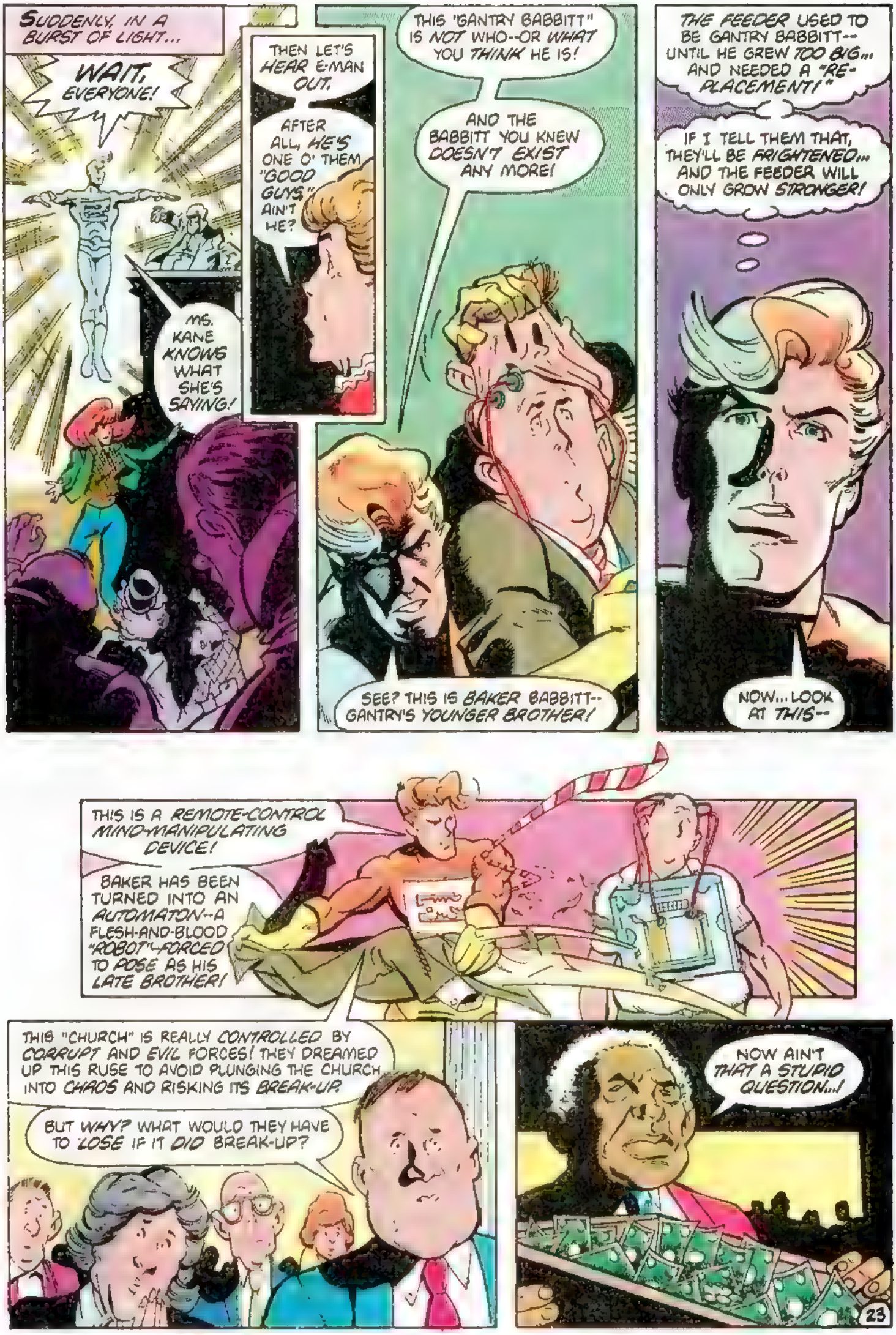
...UNTIL HIS PROGRESS IS ABRUPTLY IMPEDED... BY A ROULETTE WHEEL!
WHAMM
SEE, HARRY?
I TOLDJA THEM INSPECTORS FROM THE GAMING COMMISSION WERE REALLY WEIRD...!
AHAARRRGGHHHH
KRAAK
MAMA.
PRESENTLY...
THANKS FOR THE USE OF YOUR NECKTIE, SIR.
GLAD TO BE OF HELP, E-MAN.
THE HOTEL SECURITY GUARDS WILL SEE THAT YOU'RE TURNED OVER TO THE LOCAL POLICE, THOUGHT-MASTER.
MEANWHILE...
"...I'VE GOT ANOTHER CROSS-COUNTRY TRIP TO MAKE..."
BOY, AM I EVER STARTING TO FEEL EXHAUSTED...!
BUT I CAN'T SLOW DOWN NOW. THE BAKER BABBITT FAMILY WAS BADLY SHAKEN UP, BUT THEY COMPOSED THEMSELVES ENOUGH TO DRILL ME ON THE LAY-OUT OF THE COMPOUND.
NOW...WITH ANY LUCK, I'M MOVING TOO FAST TO BE SPOTTED BY GANTRY BABBITT'S AAOAR...
"...AND BY THE TIME MY PRESENCE IS REGISTERED BY ANY OF HIS OTHER SENSORS, I'LL HAVE RESCUED MY FRIENDS!..."
E-MAN!--
--YOU'RE JUST IN TIME!--THE TRAIN'S COMING!
CHOO-CHOO-CHOO-OOO-OO-OO
18

NO TIME TO UNTIE YOU-! SO...
...I'LL JUST SEVER THE TRACK...AND...
...ALLEZ OOP!
CHUGGA-CHUGGA-CHUGG
AND SO...
NOT A MOMENT TOO SOON!
KA-
RUNNCH
Y'KNOW SOMETHING, BIG FELLA? I TAKE BACK EVERYTHING I EVER SAID ABOUT LIKING YOU.
YOU DON'T LIKE ME ANY MORE?
NO, SILLY-- WHAT I MEAN IS...
..THIS!
SMEK
I THINK I MIGHT ACTUALLY BE FALLING IN LOVE WITH YOU.
NOW DON'T GET CARRIED AWAY, NOVA. IT'S A NATURAL HUMAN REACTION--AFTER ALL, I JUST SAVED YOUR LIFE.
YOU'LL COME TO YOUR SENSES EVENTUALLY.
NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I'D BETTER GO...
?!
19

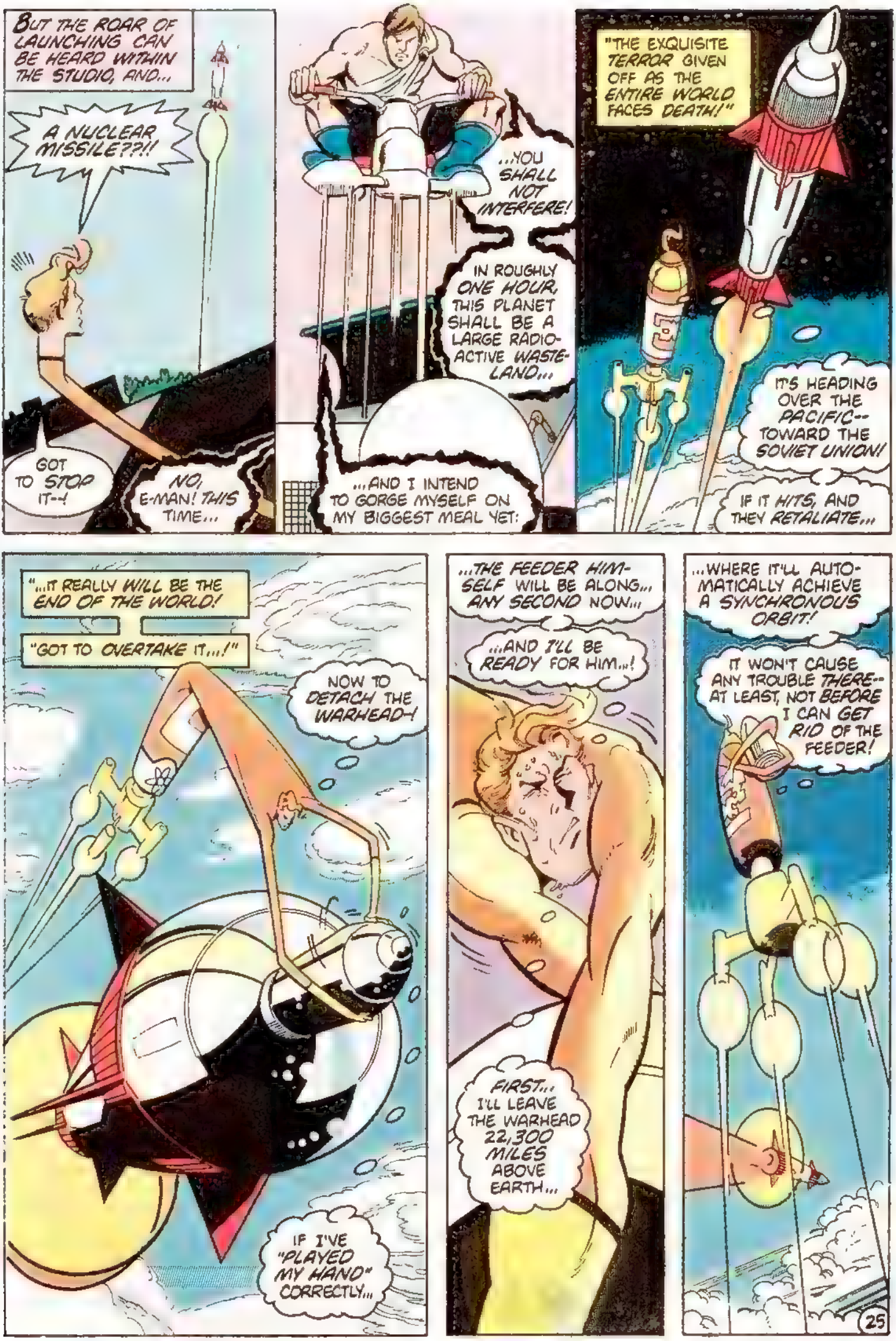

"...BEFORE DONALD BECOMES PART OF THE LOCAL TOPSOIL AND THERE ISN'T ENOUGH OF MAUSER LEFT TO PICK UP WITH A SPONGE!"
I DON'T BELIEVE YOU. FOR MONTHS, YOU'VE BEEN CARRYING A TORCH FOR ME. BUT WHEN I SAY THE WORDS YOU'VE BEEN DYING TO HEAR, YOU
?! ALEC? ALEC, YOU'RE NOT GONNA JUST LEAVE ME HERE LIKE THIS, ARE YOU?!
ALEC!!
MAUSER! YOU ALL RIGHT?
OH, SURE...
...AS LONG AS SOMEBODY WANTIN' TA HIRE A GUMSHOE DON'T MIND GETTIN' A GUMSTUMP INSTEAD...
RELAX-- YOUR FEET ARE SAFE.
I'LL JUST STUN THOSE GATORS WITH A COUPLE OF GLANCING ENERGY-BLOWS!
GLOOM
SAAYY... HOWD'JA GET OUTTA YOUR TRAP, TRONN?
THEY HAD TO LIFT THAT ENERGY-NET OFF ME FOR A MOMENT-- AND I SAW MY CHANCE.
I KNOCKED OUT ONE OF BABBITT'S HENCHMEN, SWITCHED PLACES WITH HIM...
SNIK
...AND DRESSED HIM IN A PHONEY EMAN COSTUME I MADE BY REPROGRAMMING ONE OF THE FEEDER'S CLOTHING SYNTHESIZERS.
AND NEXT DOOR...
WHEW! BUT DIDJA HAFTA WAIT TILL THE VERY LAST SECOND?
AN' WHY IS KANE TIED UP LIKE THAT OUT IN THE HALL? Y'KNOW, I THINK YA SHOULD LEAVE HER LIKE THAT...
I DON'T MIND DONALD WANTIN' TO BE A DETECTIVE...
...BUT HE'S EVEN STARTIN' TO SOUND LIKE ME, JEEZ...
20

BACK IN GANTRY BABBITT'S STUDIO...
HEAR ME BROTHUHS AN SISTERS...AH KNOW THAT WE CAN WORK TOGETHUH FO' A BRIGHTER TOMORRA!
♪A MIGHTY FOR-RR-TRESS IS OUR GOD...♪
AH KNOW WE CAN CHANGE TH' WORLD--BECAUSE TH' POWER O' BELIEF CAN MOVE MOUNTAINS!
THAT'S WHY AH KNOW THAT YEW CAN DO ANYTHANG--BECAUSE YEW, MAH BROTHUHS AN' SISTERS...
...YEW CAN BELIEVE ANYTHANG!
WHILE IN THE CONTROL-BOOTH..
ARE YOU SURE YOU CAN POP THE BOLTS ON THIS GRATE FROM INSIDE, E-MAN?
SHHH! KEEP YOUR VOICE DOWN, DONALD!
OF COURSE I CAN...
NOW, REMEMBER--EASY DOES IT...
"...UNTIL WE JUMP THEM, THEN...LET 'EM HAVE IT!
NOW...YOU'RE CERTAIN YOU CAN OPERATE THAT BOARD?
NO SWEAT...
...I WAS CAPTAIN OF THE AUDIO-VISUAL SQUAD IN HIGH SCHOOL.
OKAY. JUST BE SURE MY CONFRONTATION WITH BABBITT GOES OUT OVER THE AIR!
CONSIDER IT DONE.
JEEZ...THIS IS A REAL KICK...
21

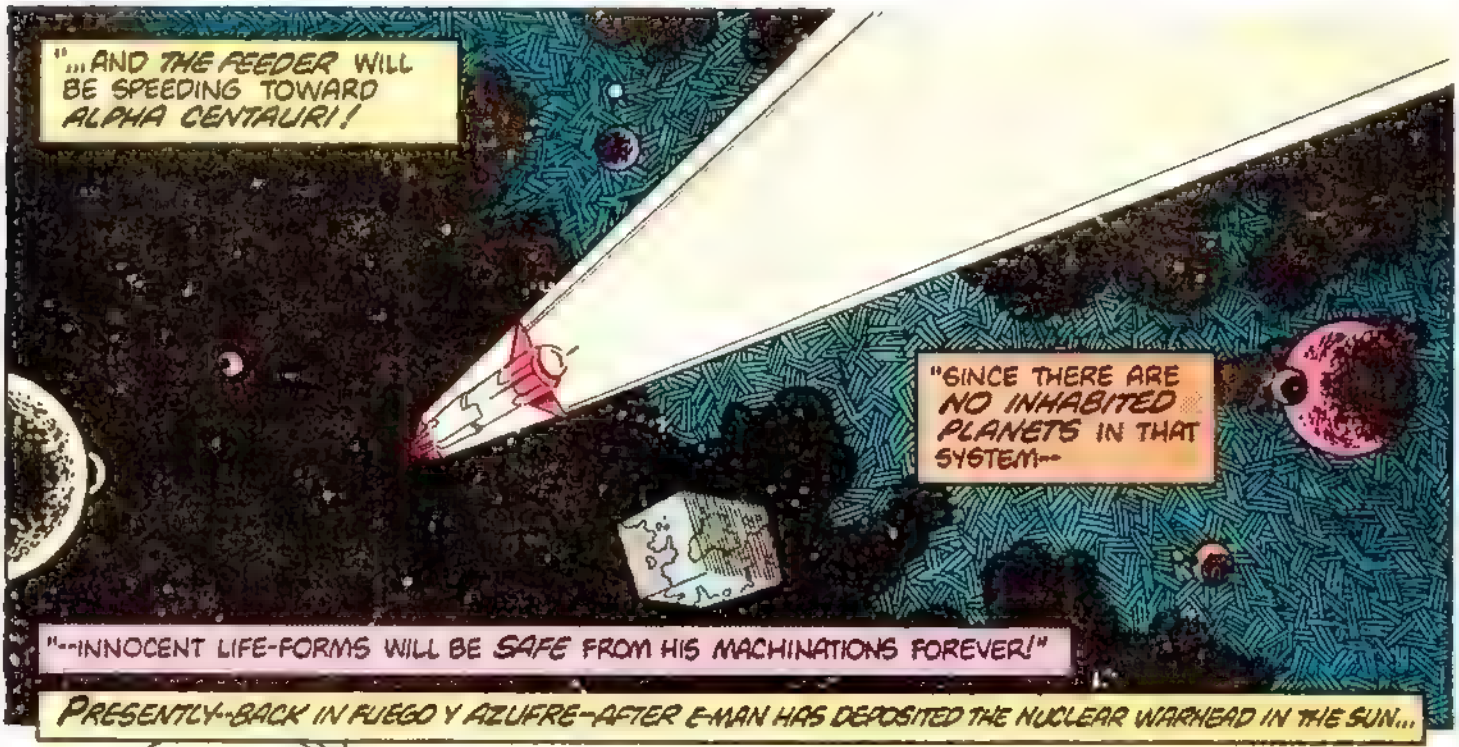
MEANWHILE...
AN' AH SAY UNTO YOU, BROTH--
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN--EVERYBODY!! LISTEN TO ME!
?!
THIS "GANTRY BABBITT" IS A FRAUD!
IF HE'S A "MAN OF GOD," THEN I'M MOTHER TERESA! LESS THAN HALF-AN-HOUR AGO, HE TRIED TO KILL ME--
WHAAAT?!
I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU BEFORE IN MY LIFE!
WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?!
WHILE BACKSTAGE...
HEY, YOU--IN THE SMELLY TRENCHCOAT!
HOLD IT! WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?
YOU TALKIN' TA ME, BUB?
AH...NO... N-NO...OF C-COURSE NOT...
I...UH...I MUST HAVE YOU CONFUSED WITH SOMEBODY ELSE IN A SMELLY TRENCHCOAT...
THIS MAN ISN'T INTERESTED IN SAVING ANY-ONE'S SOULS--
--HE'S MERELY USING YOU FOR HIS OWN ENDS--!
WHAT'S SHE SAYING?
SUMPIN' 'BOUT THE REVEREND DOCTOR BEIN' A PHONEY...!
UNITE CHURCH AND STATE!
SUBSCRIBE NOW! JACK CHICK COMICS!
WHY, THAT BRAZEN HUSSY! WHO DOES SHE THINK SHE IS?
TO HAVE THE AUDACITY TO INTERRUPT OUR WORSHIP THIS WAY! WHY, THE VERY IDEA--!
THROW 'ER OUT!
GARNER! TED! HAVE MS. KANE AND MR. MAUSER EJECTED--AT ONCE!
22


SUDDENLY, IN A BURST OF LIGHT...
WAIT, EVERYONE!
MS. KANE KNOWS WHAT SHE'S SAYING!
THEN LET'S HEAR E-MAN OUT.
AFTER ALL, HE'S ONE O' THEM "GOOD GUYS," AIN'T HE?
THIS "GANTRY BABBITT" IS NOT WHO--OR WHAT YOU THINK HE IS!
AND THE BABBITT YOU KNEW DOESN'T EXIST ANY MORE!
SEE? THIS IS BAKER BABBITT--GANTRY'S YOUNGER BROTHER!
THE FEEDER USED TO BE GANTRY BABBITT--UNTIL HE GREW TOO BIG... AND NEEDED A "RE-PLACEMENT!"
IF I TELL THEM THAT, THEY'LL BE FRIGHTENED... AND THE FEEDER WILL ONLY GROW STRONGER!
NOW... LOOK AT THIS--
THIS IS A REMOTE-CONTROL MIND-MANIPULATING DEVICE!
BAKER HAS BEEN TURNED INTO AN AUTOMATON--A FLESH-AND-BLOOD "ROBOT"--FORCED TO POSE AS HIS LATE BROTHER!
THIS "CHURCH" IS REALLY CONTROLLED BY CORRUPT AND EVIL FORCES! THEY DREAMED UP THIS RUSE TO AVOID PLUNGING THE CHURCH INTO CHAOS AND RISKING ITS BREAK-UP.
BUT WHY? WHAT WOULD THEY HAVE TO LOSE IF IT DID BREAK-UP?
NOW AIN'T THAT A STUPID QUESTION...!
23

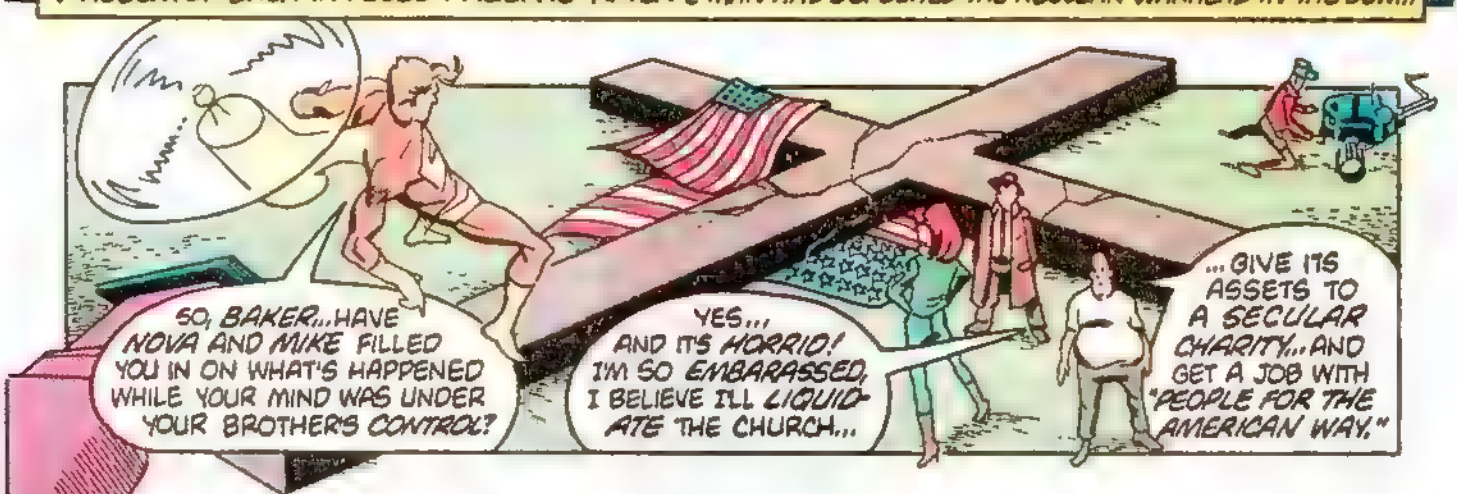
AT THAT MOMENT, IN HOMES ALL OVER THE AMERICAN HEARTLAND...
AAW, IF'N HE SAID HE WAS DR. BABBITT, BUT HE AIN'T, THEN HE WAS LYIN'!
AIN'T LYIN' A SIN, PAW?
SHORE IS, SON--WHICH IS WHY WE AIN'T GONNA HAVE NO TRUCK WITH NO CHURCH O' THE STRICT OBSERVANCE NO MORE!
GUG
WHILE IN THE FEEDER'S QUARTERS...
THE CONGREGATION --WALKING OUT?!
THEY CANNOT! THEY MUST NOT--! I SHALL STARVE!!
BOTH FURIOUS AND PANIC-STRICKEN...
...HE WHIRLS TOWARD HIS PRIVATE TV-CAMERA AND TRAINS IT ON HIS OWN FACE...
VERY WELL... "NO MORE MR. NICE GUY!"
I SHALL CUT IN ON THE TRANS-MISSION...
...SCARE THE WITS OUT OF THE ENTIRE COUNTRY...
...AND GROW TO THE SIZE OF CLEVELAND...!
HOWEVER--BLINKING LIGHTS ON DONALD'S CONTROL PANEL ALERT HIM, AND...
OH, NO, YOU DON'T, HIGH-POCKETS--!
I'M OVER-RIDING YOUR BREAK-IN :heh-heh:...
NO! NO, DAMN YOU--NO!
I-I'M STARTING TO SHRINK--! I NEED MORE FEAR--MUCH MORE--OR I SHALL PERISH--
--UNLESS I EXPLOIT THE WORLD'S GREATEST FEAR--
"--NUCLEAR ARMAGEDDON!"
24

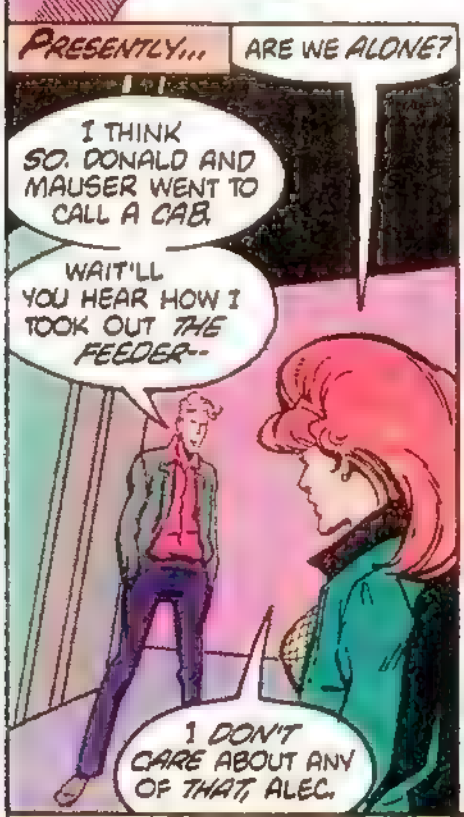

BUT THE ROAR OF LAUNCHING CAN BE HEARD WITHIN THE STUDIO, AND...
A NUCLEAR MISSILE??!!
GOT TO STOP IT--!
NO, E-MAN! THIS TIME...
...YOU SHALL NOT INTERFERE!
IN ROUGHLY ONE HOUR, THIS PLANET SHALL BE A LARGE RADIO-ACTIVE WASTE-LAND...
...AND I INTEND TO GORGE MYSELF ON MY BIGGEST MEAL YET!
"THE EXQUISITE TERROR GIVEN OFF AS THE ENTIRE WORLD FACES DEATH!"
IT'S HEADING OVER THE PACIFIC-- TOWARD THE SOVIET UNION!
IF IT HITS, AND THEY RETALIATE...
"...IT REALLY WILL BE THE END OF THE WORLD!
"GOT TO OVERTAKE IT...!"
NOW TO DETACH THE WARHEAD-!
IF I'VE "PLAYED MY HAND" CORRECTLY...
...THE FEEDER HIM-SELF WILL BE ALONG... ANY SECOND NOW...
...AND I'LL BE READY FOR HIM...!
FIRST... I'LL LEAVE THE WARHEAD 22,300 MILES ABOVE EARTH...
...WHERE IT'LL AUTO-MATICALLY ACHIEVE A SYNCHRONOUS ORBIT!
IT WON'T CAUSE ANY TROUBLE THERE-- AT LEAST, NOT BEFORE I CAN GET RID OF THE FEEDER!

A MOMENT LATER...
WHERE IS HE?
WHERE IS E-MAN?!
WHONK
I CAN'T LET YOU DEFEAT ME, E-MAN--I HAVE A MISSION HERE ON EARTH --I MUST DO GOD'S WORK!
WHAAT?!
HE DOESN'T SHARE BABBITT'S IDEAS--OR HIS STYLE--BUT... BUT...
...CAN THIS ALIEN BE SOME KIND OF RELIGIOUS FANATIC, TOO...?
DON'T YOU SEE? WHAT I DO... "DEVOURING" PLANETS...
:unnh!:
...IT'S PART OF A DIVINE LAW--SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST!
I WOULD NOT HAVE EXISTED, LO THESE MANY MILLENIA, WERE IT NOT GOD'S WILL!
IN FACT, GOD TOLD ME NOT TO LET YOU KILL ME! IT WAS RIGHT AFTER HE SAID, "IF WARNER'S DROPS ANOTHER POINT, SELL"...
FEEDER, YOU'RE BEGINNING TO BORE ME...
...AND...
JUST A MINOR ADJUSTMENT TO THE PROGRAMING--
--TO ALTER THE MISSILE'S TRAJECTORY...
SO SAYING, E-MAN OPENS A SERVICE-ACCESS-PLATE IN THE FUSELAGE AND DROPS THE NOW-UNCONSCIOUS FEEDER INTO IT...


"...AND THE FEEDER WILL BE SPEEDING TOWARD ALPHA CENTAURI!
"SINCE THERE ARE NO INHABITED PLANETS IN THAT SYSTEM--
"--INNOCENT LIFE-FORMS WILL BE SAFE FROM HIS MACHINATIONS FOREVER!"

PRESENTLY--BACK IN FUEGO Y AZUFRE--AFTER E-MAN HAS DEPOSITED THE NUCLEAR WARHEAD IN THE SUN...


SO, BAKER...HAVE NOVA AND MIKE FILLED YOU IN ON WHAT'S HAPPENED WHILE YOUR MIND WAS UNDER YOUR BROTHER'S CONTROL?
YES... AND IT'S HORRID! I'M SO EMBARASSED, I BELIEVE I'LL LIQUIDATE THE CHURCH...
...GIVE ITS ASSETS TO A SECULAR CHARITY...AND GET A JOB WITH "PEOPLE FOR THE AMERICAN WAY."


PRESENTLY...
ARE WE ALONE?
I THINK SO. DONALD AND MAUSER WENT TO CALL A CAB.
WAIT'LL YOU HEAR HOW I TOOK OUT THE FEEDER--
I DON'T CARE ABOUT ANY OF THAT, ALEC.

ALL I WANT NOW IS TO HEAR THE SAME OLD THING YOU'VE BEEN SAYING TO ME ALL ALONG.
I THINK THIS TIME I'M READY TO LISTEN.
YOU MEAN... THAT I LOVE YOU...?
BINGO. GIVE THE MAN A KEWPIE DOLL...

NEXT: WHAT STRANGE NEW TWISTS OF FATE AWAIT E-MAN AND NOVA?. WHAT STRANGE NEW EVIL WILL CONFRONT OUR HERO WHEN HE FACES HIS LATEST ANTAGONIST? FIND OUT IN...

"ALIEN HOTWAX (or: Love Means Never Having to Say You're Larry)"

E-MAIL

%FIRST COMICS, 1014 DAVIS STREET, EVANSTON, ILLINOIS 60201

Dear First Comics:

I've had mixed emotions from the beginning about the effects that creator-retained ownership would have on the comics industry. The positive effects are obvious: the writer and artist are encouraged to do their best work, knowing that if their creation becomes the next Superman, it'll be they, not the company, who'll reap the benefits and control the nature of the character's exploitation.

Less obvious are the negative effects: with the creator free to take back a character, or resell a successful concept to the highest bidder, or spin tales of a fictional world entirely separate from the rest of the publisher's line; the reader loses any sense of confidence that the series he loves so much will continue to appear regularly, and be populated by fictional characters who exist in a fully-drawn, ever-expanding continuity. Whatever their weaknesses, DC and Marvel have benefitted from the richness and complexity of their respective continuities.

Of all the new direct-only comics publishers, First Comics is the only company that seems to me to have arrived at a successful compromise. By purchasing some copyrights outright, such as the wonderfully-resurrected E-Man, and maintaining co-ownership of others, you have achieved a real cohesiveness.

Congratulations on a finely-struck balance between creator's rights and enlightened self-interest. Congratulations, too, on some excellent comics.

By the way, my first subscription issue of E-Man arrived last week via first class mail. Apparently it cost you folks 54¢ to mail it. Is this just temporary until you get a 2nd class permit? As things stand now, you can't be making anything on this arrangement.

Mike Vaughn
1316 N. 3rd Street
Bismarck, ND 58501

You raise some interesting points, Mike. First Comics does not own or co-own any characters outright, but we do have certain rights as long as we publish the title. All the negative effects you mention above can — and are — dealt with in our contracts with our creators, and these contracts allow for the possibility of cross-overs, spin-offs and the like. Unless we cancel a title or we have come to the end of our contractual relationship, a creator isn't able to arbitrarily resell a successful concept.

Then again, if it comes to pass that our relationship ends, all appropriate trademarks and copyrights transfer over to the creator, who is free to do what he or she will with them.

And that, folks, is known as doing business in the real world.

And, yes, we actually lose a couple of cents on each first-class subscription, but we do have second-class applications filed and, after an incredibly long time, we should be able to clear just about as much money on a subscription copy as we do on a store-bought copy. We don't mail out at bulk-rate because the comics often reach the subscriber late.

Dear Mike Gold and Company,

By some bizarre twist of fate my comic distributor got issues 3 and 4 of E-Man about a week apart. Briefly, I'll make a few comments on both issues.

Issue #3, the conclusion of the Dark Albatross, was just as good as I throught it would be. I was amazed that Martin Pasko could cram into a single issue a plot line that took damn near a year in an F-Men comic of another letter. Nicest parody I've seen in ages.

And of course, Staton's art gets better every issue. I figure that by E-Man #15 he will surpass Neal Adams in his prime. By #30 Staton will be worshipped internationally as a god. By #48 comic fans who write letters will have no adjectives left to describe his work, and many will die in the attempt to try and compliment his fine, fine work.

I was all set not to like #4 because Mike W. Barr wrote it. But golly, gosh darn if he didn't fool me: his script was only as good as Pasko's efforts, but his Albert Einstein narrations were even better than Pasko's. Barr is obviously familiar with the kind of people who show up at comic conventions and make collectors look like jerks. His shot at Overstreet is something I've wanted to see for years.

I was delighted to see that in #5 E-Man will be up against a super-villain. E-Man needs to have his own stable of villains to fight that are worthy of his power and humor.

I was not delighted to see the one page "Hostess" ad joke. It's been four issues now. Enough already. I get the point. Let's not flog a dead twinkie. Thank you, one and all, for making comics fun again.

T.E. Pouncey
1651 Ken Mar
Wichita, Kansas 67208

Do me a favor, T.E. Drop me a line and let me know who your comics distributor is. First Comics has not missed a publishing or distribution date in its (as of this writing) six months on the stands. We try real hard to get our books out on time, and we get ticked off on those rare occasions when somebody outside of First Comics blows it.

Dear Joe, Marty, Mike and Mike:

I'm happy to say that one of my ten favorite comics from the 1970s is now one of my three favorite comics of the 1980s! Y'know, when I first read First's E-Man #2 and 3, I was a little concerned over your caricatures of bulbous nosed Jews and buck-toothed Orientals. Not that I don't like Ebony White but that was the 1940s. I was afraid you might be taking an unnecessary risk of offending some of your readers.

Then I read E-Man #4, the villain of which is an overweight fanatic collector with a bad complexion and thick glasses. Well, listen guys, I'm a fat, pimpley, bespectacled comics fan ... and I wasn't offended at all!!!

My only complaint about E-Man is that the art isn't cartoony enough.

Randy H. Crawford
911 Park St. S.W.
Grand Rapids, MI 49504

We didn't offend you, huh? We really didn't offend you??? Well, I guess we're going to have to pull out all the stops: yes, folks, at this very moment Joe Staton's working on his "Why I Hate Cats and Think They Should Be Tortured and Killed" issue of **E-Man,** *just to prove that bad taste can, indeed, taste bad.*

Dear Mike and Rick,

Gee, E-Man #4 sounded just like one or two collectors I know.

You will note I did not say fan. To my mind there is a distinction between the two terms. Even though a fan can be a collector and vice versa. The collector tends to get every issue of every comic that ever was just for the sake of getting them. A fan, meanwhile, only gets the issues and titles he/she/it likes.

Of course, the fan has turned into the collector on occasion — I myself have become a collector of DC's Legion of Super-Heroes, one-time home base for First artists Grell, Staton and Patterson. But the fan tends to get more pure enjoyment out of comics than the collector, who tends not to be happy until he has all of them. Mielar Snugs (love the name) is a collector only.

Jef Peckham
503 Marlatt Hall
Kansas State University
Manhattan, Kansas 66506

Let me tell you a story about collectors, Jef. About five years ago, Len Wein and I were at a comics convention together somewhere. At the time, both Len and I were going crazy buying up copies of Harvey's Dick Tracy for our collections. After the dealers realized there were these two maniacs trying to out-buy each other, a few started jacking up their prices, thereby icreasing the competition between Len and myself. An expensive way to have fun.

Dear Mike,

Well now we're up to fans, eh? Next you're going to do yourselves, right?

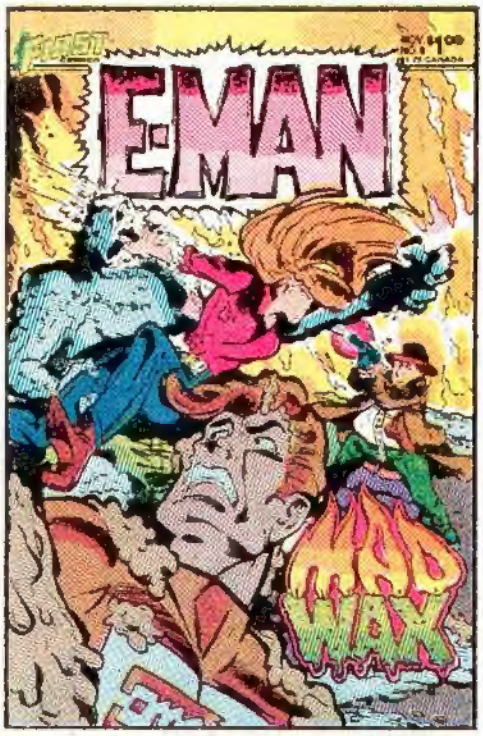
E-Man #4 has the usual (or unusual) humor in it such as "the Overprice Street Guide", things like that make this comic truly unique. Hopefully we'll get to see more of Alec's and Nova's personal life next issue.

I think the best part of E-Man is the one page ads. This issue's adventure with Teddy-Q was hilarious. I can't wait to see what you guys do with Omaha.

One more thing before I go. I totally agree with your "serious editorial." It's about time everyone wakes up to people like Jerry Falwell.

David Lipson
5432 S. Ingleside
Chicago, IL 60615

Well, we're not going to do ourselves **next** *— but we will be doing ourselves before too long. And we've already decided which First Comic we're going to do.*



NEXT ISSUE: If you're looking for a new super-villain, if you're looking for some deep background into Nova's mysterious past, if you're looking for some real comics thrills in the inimitable E-Man style, you're looking for "Alien Hot Wax" coming to you in **E-Man** #8 ... next month!

— Mike Gold

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